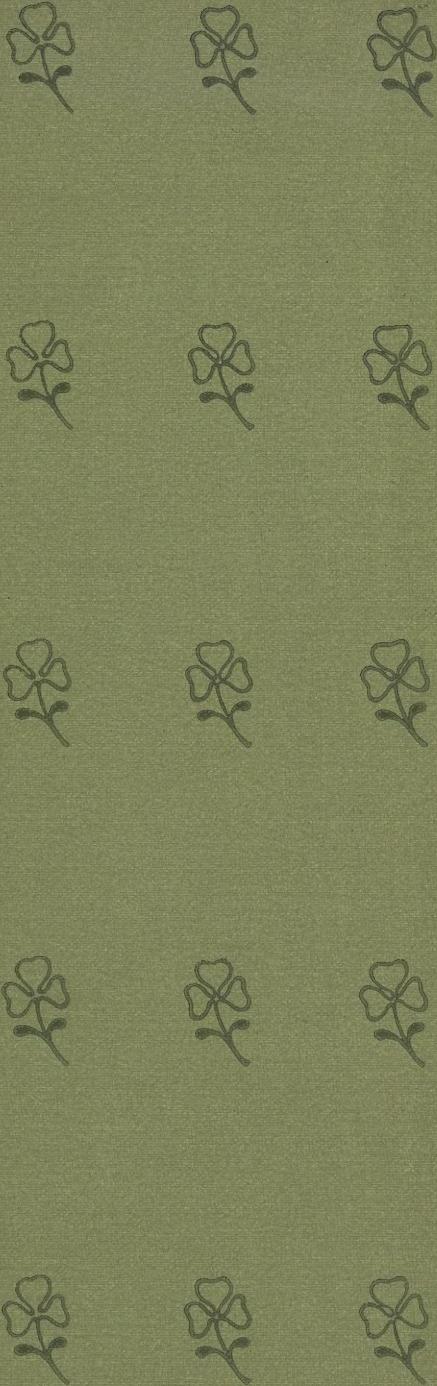
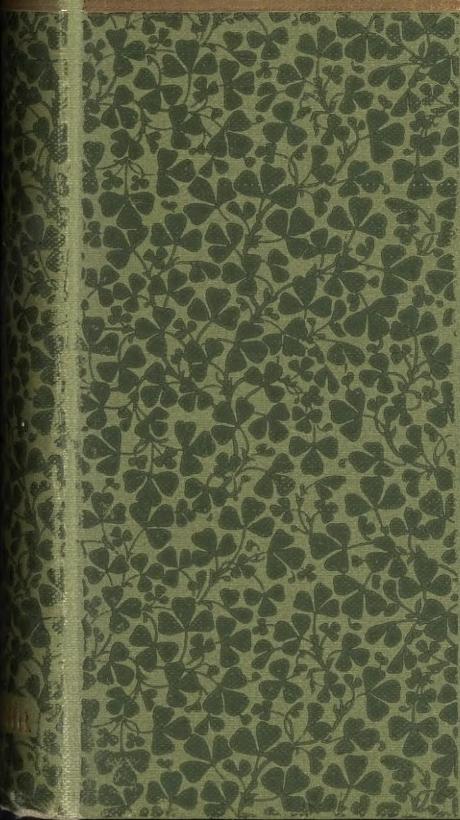
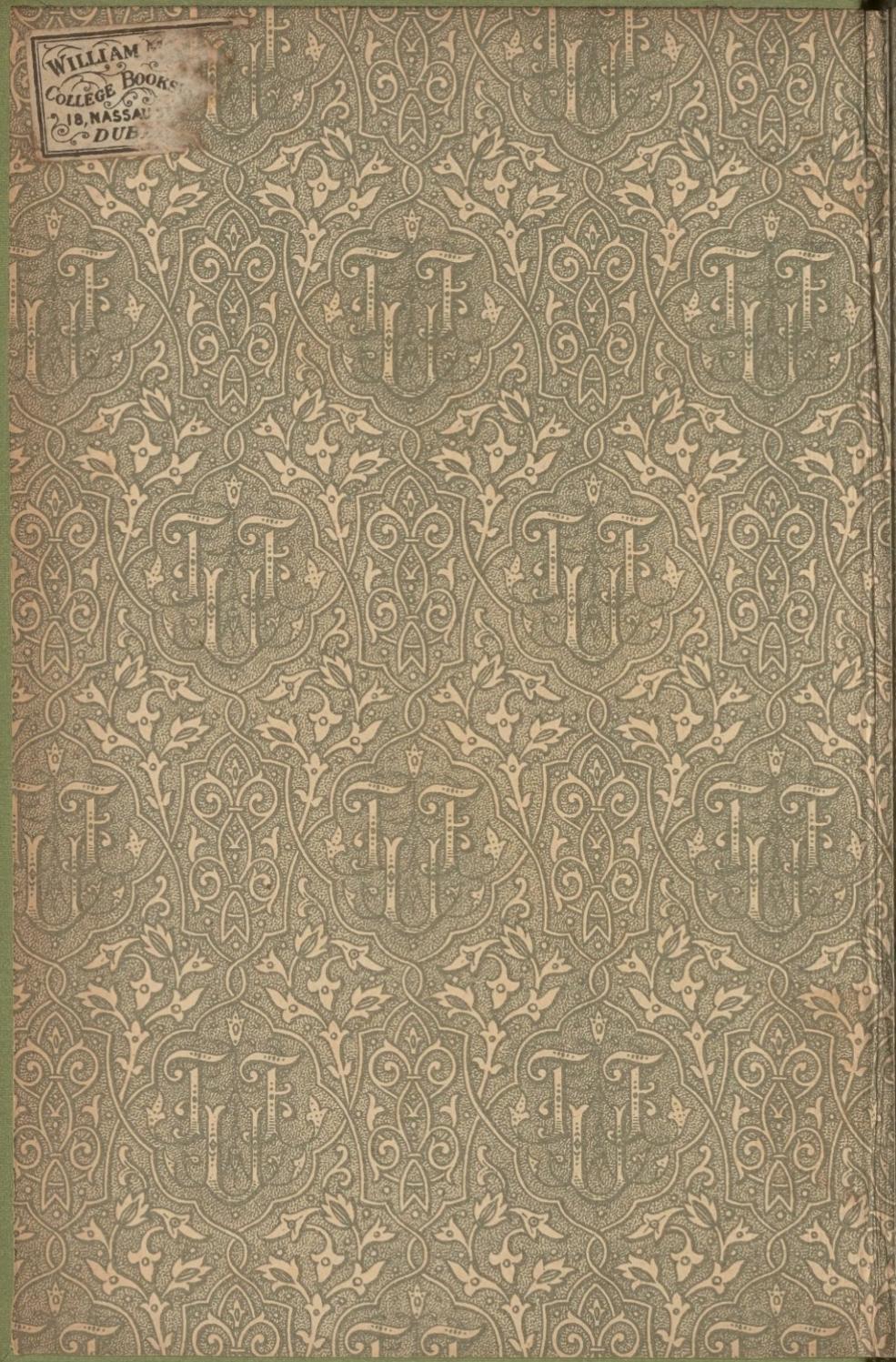


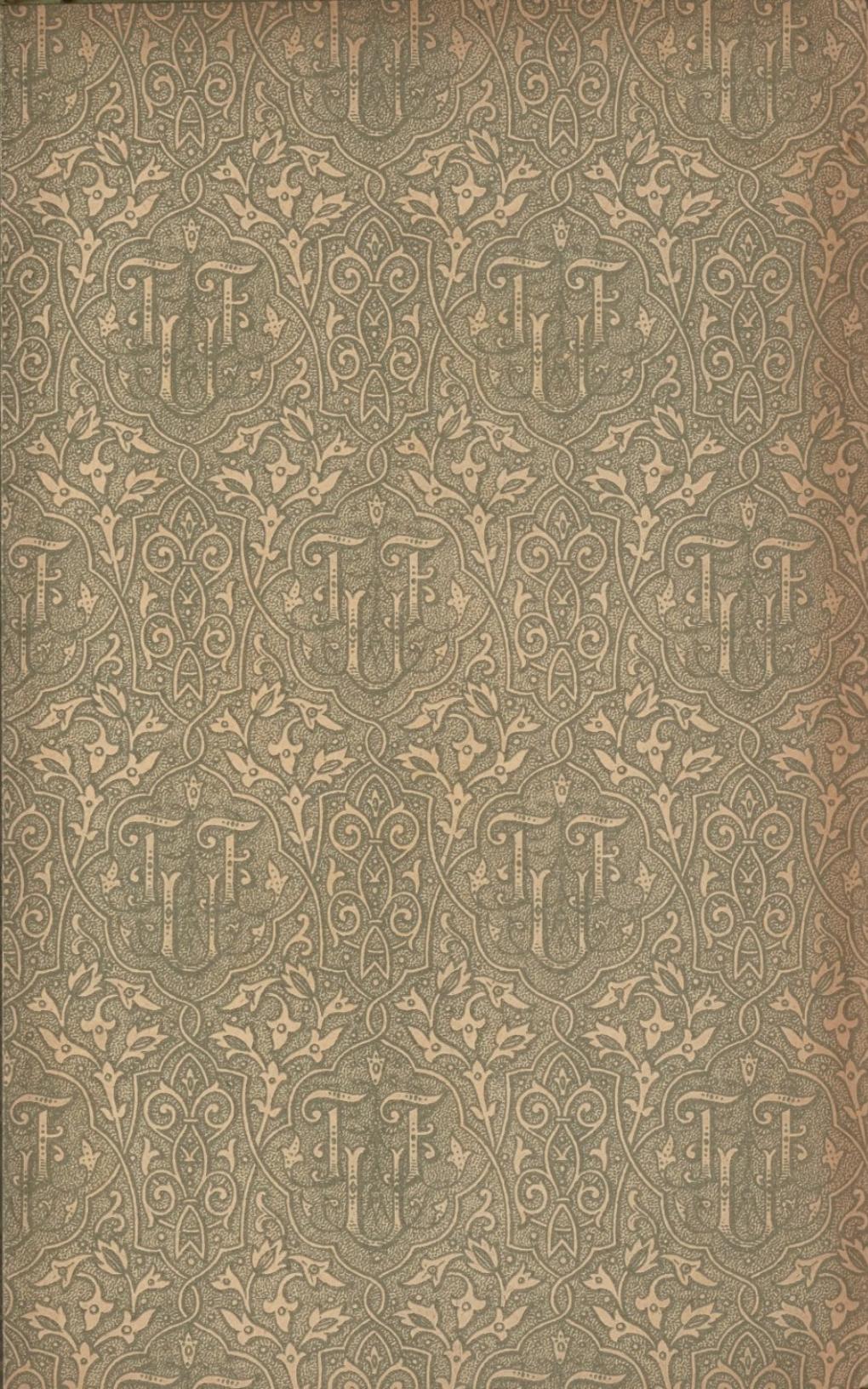
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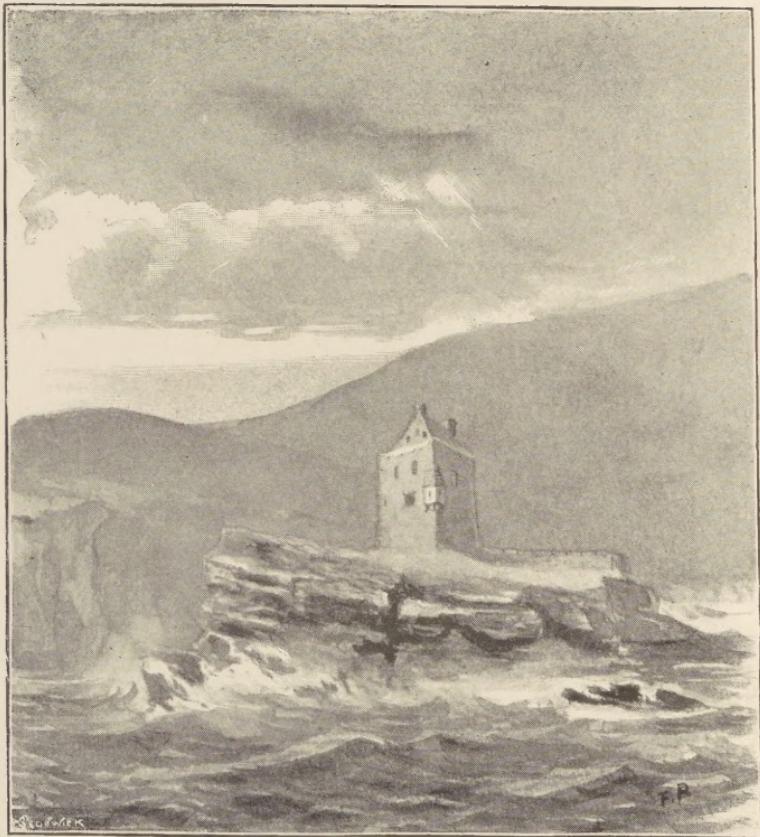




GRANIA WAILE.







THE O'MALLEY CASTLE ON CLARE ISLAND.

GRANIA WAILE

A WEST CONNAUGHT SKETCH

OF THE

SIXTEENTH CENTURY

By

Fulmar Petrel

W. SPOTTISWOORKE GREENE

"*Terra marique potens*"

THE O'MALLEY MOTTO

WITH FRONTISPICE AND MAP

LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN

1895

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INTRODUCTION.

ON the west coast of Ireland, lying across the entrance of Clew Bay, Clare Island rises abruptly from the sea into a mountain peak 1,520 feet high. Its north-west face, a series of precipices, around the base of which the ever-restless swell surges and roars, seems designed to stand as a great buttress against Atlantic storms, and so afford shelter to the lovely circle of the Bay.

From the summit of the great cliffs the heathery slopes descend rapidly in a south-easterly direction, gradually changing into gentle swells covered with green grass, down to the shore. These southern and eastern coasts of the island are formed of

low cliffs and rocky reefs, between which lie little sandy bays.

On a small rocky promontory near the most sheltered landing-place there stands a ruined tower now known as "Grania Waile's Castle," and on the southern slope of the island, beneath the vaulted roof of an old Carmelite monastery, dating back to the thirteenth century, is to be seen the richly carved altar tomb of the O'Malleys.

Grania Waile, or Grace O'Malley, is frequently referred to in the State Papers of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and a life so full of adventures as was hers could not fail to impress itself on the traditions of the country.

In the following pages an attempt has been made to draw a picture of her early life and of the scenes surrounding it.

PART OF
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GRANIA WAILE.

CHAPTER I.

INNISH CLARE.

ON the morning when our story opens, early in the latter part of the sixteenth century, some stir was going on in the castle bawn, or court, of the O'Malley Castle on Innish Clare —a few of the kerne had assembled, and a poor widow was the prominent figure. She came to bewail the loss of two lambs from the slender farm stock which she had been given. They had been carried off by the eagles. Her little son, who was astir at the dawn, saw the eagle swoop and bear a lamb from the pasturage away towards the misty cliffs, and on counting up the

flock it was found that another had been taken during the night.

On the castle steps were two young girls to whom the tale was told and to whom the poor widow looked for pity if not for help. They were eager to learn all details, more particularly the elder of the two. She was tall and well knit; her dark eyes, almost shrouded by the raven locks which fell in a heap on her shoulder, sparkled at this moment with indignation, and one might be at a loss to interpret their full meaning, were it not for those expressive lips, where sympathy and determination were strongly combined. Her face was of that type of beauty which was sure to awaken intense interest because of the soul which every feature expressed. At this time she must have seen eighteen summers, and the flaxen-haired girl who, with tears in her eyes, listened to the tale of woe and clung to her cousin for support, was about four years younger.

The elder maiden was Grace, daughter of Owen O'Malley, chieftain of the Owles and

Lord of the Isles of Aran, called also Dhu-darra or the "Black Oak." This Clare island castle was an outpost of his territory.

The younger girl was Eileen, Grace's foster-sister, daughter of Robert O'Malley who was the chief of the island.

Although her own home was on the mainland, Grace, as was customary in those days, was placed out with foster-parents, and as the times were troubled, her father had selected the household of his kinsman living on this remote island as a home for his only girl. Here, while sharing in the pursuits of the islanders, she learned the use of the sail and the oar, and while listening to tales of wild adventure on the wide, restless ocean, she acquired a deep love for all things pertaining to the sea.

Her father had often visited her when business, in connection with what in our day might be called smuggling and piracy, led him to the islands. Now a vessel from France was expected with a cargo which would be considered contraband by the Queen's officers should they fall in with it,

and which it behoved the O'Malleys to get to the mainland with all possible despatch and secrecy.

Owen O'Malley, with Teige, Grace's favourite brother, had arrived on this errand; and the time of her fosterage being over, she knew that she must return with them when they left. Although her elders may have found their detention on Innish Clare tedious, Grace was glad of the respite, and of the delay in the breaking of all those ties which had grown so strong through her childhood, and oh ! how bright that childhood had been ! Wandering over the mountains with Eileen at her side, gathering the spring flowers as they appeared, she delighted her eyes with the prospect from the mountain peak, as she gazed down on the great expanse of shining sea, and wondered what lay beyond. She had heard her eldest brother Laughlin tell of the wonderful lands of the West, where Eldorado was yet to be discovered. She had heard of the fierce fights that had taken place on the bosom of that great ocean, which, heaving and spark-

ling in the sunshine, encircled her home. She had seen her own share of fierce fighting already, for had she not on her last visit to her home helped to bind up the wound on young Donal O'Flahertie's arm when he was brought in almost dead after the raid upon Athenry? Castles in the air, imaginings of the sea, hopes and desires and plans which often made the blue-eyed Eileen tremble, Grace discussed on the sea cliffs up high above the world.

But to return. "Often I said," went on the poor widow—"often I said that no living was to be had while those eagles are there, to come plundering and robbing and killing. Where is the flock that has not been robbed and pillaged? What good, I say, are the fine boys here, and to have this go on and on, when they could stop it? Myles O'Donnell was a good lad in my day when he killed the eagles, and we had peace for four years, but now there isn't a man in the world."

Several of the young men spoke together. They would climb to the nest and kill the

birds, root them out, and destroy them for ever. To Grace's mind, however, this was all empty brag. Had not she lost a lamb—a pet lamb with a necklace of sea shells made by herself and Eileen around its neck? Had she not gone direct to the best boys on the island, and what answer did she get ?

" Shure it is not to have me killed you want. It is sorry you yourself would be if I was."

Another had said, " If I could be lowered down by a rope, I would go ; but I know the spot well, and the rock above the nest overhangs, and no rope would go near the nest."

Another, " Didn't you hear how Miles O'Donnell was torn well-nigh to pieces fifteen years ago now by the old bird when he climbed to the nest ? and it was in an easier place then than now."

It was all no use. Nothing would be done. Grace had often wandered up Knockmore ; she had stood on the brink of the great precipice ; she had rolled stones down and seen the eagles come screaming from

the eyrie ; she had found the wool and bones of a lamb on the bare rocks where it had been eaten : but what could she, a weak girl, do ?

Now, however, at this woman's wail, a fresh chord was struck, a deeper chord than her own loss could have reached, thrilled through her.

Owen O'Malley at this moment appeared on the scene, shaking the sea water from his coarse frieze garb. He had been in the galley to Innishturk and back, and as he was hungry after his morning's sail and wet from the flying spray, he was anxious to get indoors and set to work. Consequently with abundant promises he dismissed the widow and her audience, and in a few minutes was sitting at meat with three of his lusty companions. The women served and were eager to know whether the rumour of the wreck of the French vessel and murder of the crew was correct, and were much relieved to hear that the story had not been confirmed. They cared little for the gunpowder, arms, and wine which were stored in the hold,

but the officers were old friends. They wore velvet and danced well, and it often happened that various small articles of jewelry were sent as *douceurs* by the merchants who shipped the cargo, knowing well the importance of such trifles in the maintenance of their trade. These gifts were sometimes of great value, but valuable or not, the expectations which were indulged in by all concerned intensified the interest and anxiety on the vessel's behalf. Grace alone seemed indifferent ; her mind was pre-engaged, and as soon as the meal was over, she slipped from the apartment, and, crossing the drawbridge, left the castle.

She was not long alone, for Eileen, ever watchful of Grace's movements, was soon on her track. She was puzzled by Grace's demeanour during their hasty meal. And now, when Eileen reached the outworks, Grace was only just visible far up the hill-side, a speck on the swelling pasturages.

"How could she have gone without me?" "Why did she not ask me to go too?" were some of the thoughts upper-

most in Eileen's mind as she panted up the flowery slope, her golden locks fluttering in the breeze.

Grace, seeing her coming, sat down to wait. "I suppose you wonder at my leaving you, dear Eileen?" she said.

Eileen did wonder. "Where are we going?" was all she replied.

"Well," said Grace, "I did not wish to say anything to you about it, but now that you have come I must tell you. You see these eagles are much on my mind; it is dreadful to think of the harm they are always doing. There is no use in expecting any of the men to do anything unless they get the chance to shoot them, which is not likely."

"And what do you expect to do?" asked Eileen.

"That is just it," said Grace. "I may not be able to do anything, but I am going to see more of the cliffs where the eagles have their nest, and find out why it cannot be reached. I saw it from the sea the day we went in the galley round the island."

"I fear for you," said Eileen, "and I think we ought to go home."

"I know you fear for me, and I knew that you would want to come with me, and I could do nothing if you were with me."

Eileen looked sad; she had thought that Grace liked her company. How terrible it would be to think that she did not!

Grace, perceiving this, went on, "I wish we could always be together, and never, never, never part."

Eileen's face brightened.

"But the truth is, I want to clamber down the cliffs from the top—not far, so don't look frightened, there is no fear for me; but I want you to wait for me somewhere near the top."

By this time they had resumed their walk, and, crossing the first ridge and the marshy valley beyond, were now above the grass slopes, and the heather was beneath their feet. The moan of the sea had become more subdued. It was a long climb, full 1,200 feet of an ascent. They reached the mountain's brow and saw the

great western sea from which the rugged cliffs of Achill rose purple to the northward, and the group of islets called the Bills, girt by a white circle of foam.

From their feet the ground fell very rapidly to slopes of short slippery grass which in some places extended down the face of a steep buttress, in others ended close at hand in a sudden precipice. Gullies of bare rock alternated with grass slopes, but so steep that it was impossible to see far downwards. Further on, however, where the mountain ridge swelled outwards, the huge, dark cliffs were visible from their heather-clad crown to their foam-encircled base, close to which pillar crags towered up out of the sea, white with sea birds.

Grace and Eileen had often come so far. Often they had lain on the cliff summit, wondering at the swell heaving in slowly and, apparently so gently, breaking into clouds of white foam. They had listened to the cry of the gulls as they sailed along, lazily enjoying their powers of gliding with no apparent effort on the summer air. With

trembling heart Eileen now promised to wait alone while Grace, following a very ill-defined sheep track, descended towards the brink of the cliffs below. Nimble as a kid, her feet clad in the raw hide sandals or *pampooties*, she availed herself of every tussock and projecting crag; tufts of sea thrift were now the best footing. It was a perilous climb for any one, and almost certain death to one not having the skill that Grace possessed. Then there were bare rocks, and finally Grace could by kneeling on a crag peer over into the depths. She was now immediately over the eyrie of the eagles. Some might well feel giddy in such a situation. She had never heard or thought of such a thing. She easily dislodged a splintered piece of rock, and, pushing it over the edge, sent it crashing down. Breaking into fragments after the first bound, it vanished from sight, but it had the desired effect. Out sailed the eagle with angry cries, and the screaming of the young ones reached her ears.

Satisfied as to one thing, that the tyrant

brood were still in the nest, her next thoughts were given to the various grassy strips extending downwards. To the right she seemed to see one of these from which a still lower one was accessible, and which was low enough to be on a level with the nest ; could she but reach this, and then could she but get around the face of the rocky gully separating that slope from the buttress, she was sure the nest might be reached.

At this moment Eileen's pent-up anxiety could wait no longer. She sprang to her feet and cried out beseechingly to Grace to return.

The golden eagle, sailing round, gave a scream in reply, and Grace, seeing that the sun was now sinking towards the west, retraced her steps, and, ascending the steep slope, was, to Eileen's delight, in a few minutes at her side.

"I am so glad you are back, and that it is all over," said Eileen.

"All over ! Why, it is not yet begun," replied Grace.

"How, begun? What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean this. You must say nothing of where we have been, or anything at all about our evening's climb, and if you are good you may come with me in the morning."

Eileen was "good." No one asked them on their return where they had been, so accustomed were these children to wander at their own sweet will. And long before the sounds of evening merriment were over in the central hall the two maidens were in dreamland.

Whether Grace dreamed or not we do not know. At the first streak of dawn, and ere the stars had faded from the sky, she was awake. As for Eileen, she seemed to have scarcely slept at all. The two, quickly dressing, were out in the crisp morning air. In their raw hide shoes, and woollen dress, nothing distinguished them from the ordinary peasants about them, save that the coarse cloak over Grace's shoulders was fastened by a brooch of gold of Spanish make, set with two

rubies, which marked her as a chieftain's child. The stars still sparkling in the western sky were not brighter than her eyes at this moment, and the pure blush of the dawn was not warmer than that of her cheeks, slightly flushed with the excitement which filled her mind. She had work to do, and meant to do it.

Eileen, too, was anxious, not for herself, or what she was going to do. Her whole soul depended for its life on sympathy. Now Grace was everything to her. Grace's happiness was her happiness. Grace's plans were her plans. She would stand by her and help her. It was delightful to her to think that she even might help. From amongst the pile of wreck timber, where portions of an ill-fated ship was being broken up for firewood, Grace selected a long iron bolt. It was rather heavy, but she felt that it might be useful, and wending their way through the little group of huts where the retainers were still sleeping; the girls, following the same track as yesterday, were soon up on the mountain-side. Here they

paused and faced eastwards to watch the glories of the sunrise.

Clew Bay lay beneath them ; the islands at its head, shrouded in grey mist above which the sky blazed with saffron-coloured light. Higher up a number of golden cloudlets floated. Out of the mists at its base and against the glory of the dawn the dark conical peak of Croagh Patrick stood up clear and sharply cut. Away further to the south Muilrea, the highest peak in Connaught, had caught the golden tint of dawn, as had also Slieve More and the other peaks of Achill to the northward. As the girls watched, the sun rose and transformed the steel-blue waters of the bay into a floor of shining gold. Eileen's bright hair responded to the access of glorious light, while the heather and spring flowers of the mountains, sparkling with dewdrops, stood out from the dull tints of the rocks with marvellous distinctness.

A new day had commenced—a day to be remembered by Grace through a long, eventful life.

CHAPTER II.

THE EAGLES.

SPRINGING to their feet, the girls continued to ascend and turned off towards the right at a point short of where they had reached the cliffs on the day before. A glance downwards satisfied Grace that she was right so far ; and as Eileen trembled too much even to ask Grace to explain what she meant to do, she silently took charge of the cloak which Grace flung off, and then promised to remain where she was till Grace returned to her side. Grace's mind was too full of thoughts for her to say much ; taking the iron bolt in her hand, she climbed downward toward the brink of the dizzy abyss where a grass slope, like the one she had descended yesterday,

ended in bare crags. Reaching these she turned round, and, looking upwards to Eileen nestled amidst the heather, she gave her a wave of her hand and a few notes of a well-known song that they sang together by way of encouragement. The next step took her out of Eileen's sight, and now the work commenced in earnest. The rocks were loose and had to be touched cautiously. The tufts of sea thrift gave but a poor hold. Then she was below the crags on the lower slope of grass, on which beds of the white-flowered silene flourished. Here she paused. Above her the serrated line of cliffs stood up clear against the sky. From the depths below, the moan of the ocean swell breaking on the rocks thrilled the air. Gulls cackled as they sailed round the cliffs, or wrangled on the ledges, and the quaint little puffins peered from the burrows where they had their nests, or in alarm flew downwards to the sea.

A few yards below where she lay, holding firmly by the herbage, the rocks plunged vertically to the waves. The point which,

however, riveted her attention was where an overhanging rock sheltered a dark hollow ; the slope below it whitened with bones of sheep and birds, the white feathers of sea-gulls, and general *débris* from the eagle's nest.

Between her and it a gully, wet with the dripping of waters from the mountain peak, and green with the tufts of the sea fern, seemed to form an impassible barrier. She clambered to its brink, with one foot on a ledge, the other unsupported and swaying over the sea one thousand feet below, she paused.

Should she return ? The rocks, however, gave firm grips for her hands, and she gained confidence. A ledge below seemed to offer foothold. She lowered herself carefully on to it ; then from ledge to ledge, sometimes clinging to the insecure tufts of fern, sometimes under the splash of a rill from the cliffs above, but steadily onward, still holding to her iron bolt, she made her way.

Now she had reached the beds of white silene below the nest, and rested to take breath. The screaming of the young eagles

was all this time in her ears. Suddenly a harsher scream sounded near, and the male eagle came into sight with a bleeding grouse in his claws. Seeing Grace's figure cowering in the herbage, he swept round her angrily, but then sailed off to a crag, where he alighted, and devoted his attention to plucking the grouse, and occasionally screaming loudly.

The old birds had evidently been foraging, as they usually did in the early morning. The mother eagle might soon return. This was what Grace had most reason to fear ; so, scrambling up the slope amidst the bones of lambs that had been stolen from the poor people of the island, she reached the nest. No feeling of pity stayed her hand, one screaming eaglet with its brains dashed out was sent into mid air. Then another ; and, as she raised her hand to strike a third, a fiercer cry rang through the air, a dark shadow crossed the nest, and, facing round, Grace saw the great she-eagle with a lamb in her claws, her eyes flashing fury. All the strength, courage, and fierceness that

this extraordinary girl possessed was now on its trial. Quick as light the third young eagle was slain, but equally quickly the old bird, swooping round and dropping the lamb from her claws, came straight at Grace, who, sinking on her knees in the nest, covered her head with one arm and, raising the bolt in her right hand, struck at her enemy with her full strength.

The blow told, for one wing fell helpless; but the furious bird, seizing Grace's left arm in her talons, struck forward at her eyes. She felt a stinging pain in her temple; the weight of the huge bird was crushing her down. The blood from the wound dimmed her eyes: a fight to the death was evidently going on. Grace's right arm, however, was free for one more blow. She felt it was her last chance. With a sudden effort she pushed the bird from her and, at the same time swinging the iron bar, which she still grasped, backwards, she delivered a blow at the eagle's head. The claws relaxed, the head

fell back, and rolling in a great brown ball of feathers down the slope, it vanished over the precipice. One young eaglet, which had done its best at biting and tearing while the fight lasted, was now to be disposed of. Grace thought for an instant; would she spare its life and try to take it home? Then she felt it would be impossible. She was tired and weak; its life might be spared, but the thought of the little creature dying by inches pained her. At this moment the male bird seemed inclined to fight; and the demon rising once more in Grace's bosom, strengthened her hand to strike. The fourth eaglet was killed, and the old male sailed away towards Achill.

Her work was done, the tyrant brood destroyed; and for four long years there was peace among the flocks of Innish Clare. The lambs skipped by their dams, and the kids frolicked about the crags in safety.

We must now return to Eileen. For a full half-hour she had sat, patiently bent upon doing exactly as Grace wished. She

had seen the eagle bearing the lamb in its claws sweep past her. She had heard the cries of the birds mingling with the moan of the sea. The time seemed hours. She grew impatient. She stood up and again sat down several times. Then she crept downwards a little. Then a little further. An hour had nearly passed ; the screams had ceased. There was now no sound but the boom of the surf and the breeze singing through the heather. This silence was terrifying. She crept further down to where the rocks jutted out, her heart beating. Here she paused. Immediately below she heard a rattle of stones falling, and as she leaned forward, there, close to her, was Grace's hand clutching the rock, while her other hand sought for a grip above. Eileen grasped it, and with all her strength drew Grace to the crag in safety. "Dear Eileen!" was all she could say, then sank fainting to the ground.

The place they were now in was where the crags projected from beneath the turf, which, sloping down from above, formed a

hollow of some extent. Eileen, taking the handkerchief which bound her hair, and which had been a gift from a Spanish captain, tore it into strips, and placing some succulent leaves of the little rock plants in the wounds, bound up Grace's lacerated arm. Her face, white as marble, was streaked with blood from the wound on her temple. This scar, though a mere scratch, left a mark which she bore to her dying day. To it Eileen also attended.

Grace opened her eyes a little and tried to rise; loss of blood, however, rendered her too weak to do so now that the stimulus of present danger was removed. She could not stand.

"Oh! what has happened to you? What can I do for you?" whispered Eileen, tears of joy in her eyes at hearing Grace able to speak to her.

"I don't know, I am sure," said Grace. "If I had a drink of milk I feel I should be strong at once."

Nature's demand for support was thus clearly expressed.

But how could Eileen get it? She could not leave Grace here in a semi-conscious state; she might roll from the crag before she could return. Grace too saw the difficulty, and said—

“We will wait here a little longer, I will then be well enough to creep to the top of the slope. The day is long, and you can then leave me, or I may be well enough to go on.”

For an hour Grace slept; the sun, now risen above the mountain ridge, shining down upon her. When she awoke she felt stronger, and, with Eileen close beside her crept slowly up the steep grass slope, and reached the summit. Still very weak, and fearing she might not be able to hold up for long, they made no delay, but commenced the descent.

The smoke ascending from the cabins far below rose vertically in the quiet air, the breeze had gone to sleep. The sun sparkled on a glassy sea. Nature seemed so sleepy, and Grace, so much in sympathy with it, sank quietly to the heather,

and slept too. It was now Eileen's turn for action, and she was equal to the occasion. Seeing that Grace was in perfect safety and not likely to awake for some time, Eileen set off down the mountain-side. Bounding like a young kid from tussock to tussock, down the steep heather, down the steep grass slopes, scaring the sheep from her path ; down past a little tarn, from which a tiny stream sparkled onwards ; and at last, almost breathless, she reached the first huts of the tenants, and then her father's home. The men of the household were engaged in hauling up a boat for repairs. She first thought that she had better tell them all about it, then she feared they might want to rush off to rescue Grace, so she first went for a small vessel filled with milk, then quietly she spoke to Owen O'Malley.

"This is for Grace. She is up on the slope of Knockmore a little hurt."

"A little hurt!" exclaimed her father.
"How? Who hurt her?" he added furiously, so accustomed was he to acts of

violence, at the same time moving in the direction indicated.

Donal O'Flahertie, seeing something was going on, and hearing Grace's name, joined in with anxious inquiries. He would scarcely wait for a reply. Eileen, now almost running by their side, told them briefly what had happened. Owen, knowing the distance was long, called out to one man to fetch a pony, then he sent another back to the castle to prepare the household for her coming. As for Eileen, her thoughts were concentrated on the care of the milk she carried; and now, sitting on the pony, she served the party as a guide. For Donal O'Flahertie no guide was necessary, he knew the direction. What was Knockmore to him if he had to traverse it again and again? By this time he was far up the hill-side. To find Grace in the heather was no easy task, it grew so luxuriantly. He, however, knew the direction the girls had taken.

Now he was on the steep mountain ridge, and, pausing to wipe the dew from his brow,

he looked up and down. He called Grace's name, but there was no reply.

A little to the westward a few sheep stood as if attracted by some object in that direction. He moved on, and there was the object of their anxiety. Grace, sleeping peacefully, the handkerchief binding her forehead, the wounded arm resting on a tuft of soft heather, her face very pale, but it was Grace in safety, and Donal was overjoyed. How he longed that she should awake, and yet he would not rouse her for worlds. He knelt and watched her breast heaving in gentle sleep, her lips half parted.

Then she stirred a little, gave a deep sigh, and raising herself on her elbow opened her eyes slowly. She seemed no way surprised at finding him near, but, resting her head on his shoulder, she just uttered his name in sheer happiness as he for the first time in his life pressed a kiss on her lips. Then he looked to her wounds, and the poor arm, so stiff and sore, was bent up gently and bound to her breast.

All this time the rescue party were toiling up the heather. The pony had been left lower down the hill-side. Eileen came first with her wooden goblet of milk. Owen, puffing at this unwonted kind of exertion, came next, and a line of the retainers brought up the rear. Grace seemed much the better for her sleep, and eagerly drank the milk, to Eileen's great delight. Donal insisted on carrying her down to where the pony was grazing, to which she assented, and as the evening closed in they reached the homestead, and a woman wise in herbs was in attendance to treat the wounds. The men discussed the affair far on into the night. Some few were sceptical; but all doubts as to Grace's prowess were banished when old Murrogh O'Malley appeared on the beach next morning, on his return from fishing, with the dead eagle over his shoulder, which he said he had picked up floating in the sea.

It took some time for Grace to recover, and then the time came when she should say good-bye to her foster-parents and start for

her home on the mainland. This was a terrible wrench to the ties of early friendship, not however, a breaking of them, for such ties are never quite broken, but it was a sore trial at least. The good friar whose care it was to teach Grace all that a chieftain's daughter should know for this world and the next, was there to take a fond farewell. As for Eileen, she was only consoled by the thought that she would come to see Grace in her home sometime. Many of the retainers, particularly the poor widow, wept for the loss of that bright face and warm heart to which they had become so attached.

Twenty sturdy youths launched the galley into the sea. The party were on board, Donal O'Flahertie at the helm. The sail was hoisted, and with the first puff of the westerly wind the galley bounded onward, bearing Grace from the home of her childhood to the home of her birth.

CHAPTER III.

KILMEENA CASTLE.

IN those troubled times, when all Ireland was torn by strife and warfare, the western portions of Mayo had the advantage of comparative seclusion and safety. Its mountain fastnesses afforded a protection against assault by land, and the intricate channels amongst the innumerable islands fringing the coast formed a refuge from invaders by sea. The crops there were set and gathered in with little danger from the marauder. The fishermen plied net and line unmolested, and the inhabitants might have lived in peace only for the fact that most Irish chieftains, when not engaged in private broils, were bound to help each other in whatever campaigns might be going

forward. Strife between the O'Donnells and the O'Neils of Ulster, and between these powerful chieftains and the English of the Pale, constant quarrelling between the Clanrickards in the vicinity of Galway and the chiefs from the south, the disturbances arising out of the Desmond rebellion, together with Spanish and French filibustering expeditions on the sea, too often kept the whole west coast in a state of unrest.

The O'Malleys, though a comparatively small sept in themselves, rendered most important help to their more powerful neighbours by means of their ships and expert sailors; and when not quarrelling with the Burkes led by MacWilliam Eighter in the north and east, or with the O'Flaherties, their next neighbours to the south, joined these clans in expeditions beyond Galway or Sligo on land, and anywhere along the whole west coast of Ireland by sea.

But to return to our story. The galley bearing O'Malley and his party from Clare Island shot along gaily before the west

wind. The sails boomed out on either hand and the crisp foam rushing past her sides. Grace watched the little beach astern so long as she could discern the group there assembled to bid them God-speed. Gradually the beach, then the village and the castle, then the low land sank beneath the waves, and Knockmore reared its huge outline against the sky with all its details lost in the silvery sea haze. Grace was now at the helm, Owen feeling proud to see how intently she watched the sails. As the boat could not fail to yaw from side to side as she leaped from billow to billow, Donal O'Flahertie stood beside with a word of advice or a ready hand to help should the strain on the steering become too great.

The galley was now heading to an entrance between two islands covered with grass of emerald hue, a portion of the great archipelago forming the head of Clew Bay. Now the long ground swell indicated shallow water. Then the sea curled over and broke on the shoals. On the right the great conical peak of Croagh Patrick, its purple sides

seamed with long lines of bare, crumbling stones, rose from the shore. When the first island was passed, Owen took the helm and guided the galley amongst the winding channels ; and while the crew quickly tended the sails, she shot in under the shelter of the mountain and then grounded on the beach.

Close to where they landed the shore presented a busy scene. A fine vessel had been built from planks obtained from a captured cargo and timbers sawn from oak-trees felled on the slopes of Croagh Patrick. Her fine lines and clean run showed that speed had been aimed at, while her top sides, bulging out at the water-line, then falling in and rising high both fore and aft, into a forecastle and a poop, gave her safety in rough water and clear room to work the guns, for which her bulwarks were pierced.

Men were at work tarring her sides, and carpenters were preparing her spars, while further on along the beach two smaller boats were being built for fishing purposes.

The foreman builder coming forward addressed his chief.

"She'll be a brave vessel, O'Malley," looking up at the high prow with satisfaction; "and all is ready for the launch at the next spring tides. Have you heard aught of the guns?"

"No," replied O'Malley. "The ship should be here now. We heard of some wreckage having come ashore at Innishturk, but on going there found only some old planks and spars that have been in the sea for months. Unless she has fallen into the hands of an English ship or of some of those piratical ruffians, I know not what has caused the long delay."

Donal O'Flahertie now ascended by the scaffolding to her deck. It was a great venture—this first ship of so large a size. Donal was proud, for he had been chosen as captain to command her; the O'Malleys and the O'Flaherties at this time being close allies and joining in many an enterprise. Grace too clambered up to the deck to be told of all the perfections of the ship, and to share

Donal's happiness in contemplating the work.

"We'll sweep the seas before us when we get this brave craft afloat, and instead of running from the Queen's ships we'll make them run from us. The Saxon may slaughter the farmers, and make their cattle to walk, poor devils! but he'll find a different business when he meets the O'Flaherties and the O'Malleys."

Grace's thoughts were running in the same groove, and she with even greater vividness pictured the victories in store. The day, however, was now advancing, and as Donal was to leave Clew Bay and ride south into his own country, they descended to the group of admiring workmen—mostly tenants, with a few Scots who were engaged in O'Malley's service. O'Flahertie's people were there with their shaggy ponies. On the bare back of one O'Flahertie sprung, and with *adieux* to Grace, and a parting word to O'Malley that he would return on the day before the full moon, when the launch would be attempted, he and his

followers, well-armed, filed up the hill-side and disappeared in the woods.

O'Malley and his party now returned to the galley, as they had still some distance to go before they reached home.

The labyrinth of channels through which they wended their way is one that should be seen in order that its extraordinary complexity could be understood. These islands, said to be three hundred and sixty-five in number, composed of boulder clay or the terminal moraines of some ancient glacier, are covered with rich pasturage, and so much resemble the promontories which project from the mainland, that only one knowing the local pilotage could say when a channel is entered, whether it has an opening at its further end or not. Between some islands the tide ran with the galley, while again other channels the ebb was so strong in against them that it took both oars and sail to make headway. Besides the bluff islands, on which O'Malley's cattle grazed, innumerable reefs hindered navigation, some altogether covered, while on others

only a few boulders appeared over water and afforded resting-places for cormorants.

In less than an hour a particularly narrow channel opened eastwards; the boat was urged onwards by oars and sail; the inner basin was reached, and there, at the head of the bay, stood Kilmeena Castle, a stronghold of the O'Malleys.

The castle keep and the outworks crowning the low ridge of rock were reflected in the still water, on the placid surface of which a foreign-looking vessel lay at anchor, while a number of smaller craft were aground on the shallows or hauled up to the beach between ridges of boulders covered with black seaweed. Boats were going to and fro from the Spanish ship—for such she was—carrying bales of hides and dried fish and depositing them on board.

A galley had just arrived from the outer coast with a cargo of the same material to be shipped to Spain. Trade and naval power were here combined; for when occasion offered these men, now so peaceably engaged, could become fierce fighters, and

the O'Malley galleys, secure from pursuit amid this island stronghold, were a terror to the traders on the whole coast.

On seeing the galley coming up the Channel many of the men left their work to welcome their chief, and Grace was embraced by the women of the house as they ascended the steps leading from the water to the western gate of the castle. The outworks passed they entered the keep. The central hall, dimly lighted by one heavily mullioned window high up in the eastern wall, was surrounded by a gallery, from which hung arms, words, pikes, shields, while on the walls were matchlocks and powder-horns mounted in polished brass. The centre of the room was occupied by a table of dark red wood brought from the Spanish Main. Dressers with shelves loaded with Dutch ware and silver plate stood against the walls, and benches and chairs were there for a goodly company. From the heavy rafters of the oak ceiling an iron lamp hung by chains of grotesque design, while at each side of

the high fireplace iron brackets for torches of bog-wood were fixed to the walls. The dry rushes with which the floor was strewn gave out an agreeable odour and mingled with the smell of smoke from the turf smouldering on the great hearth which was a necessary adjunct of an Irish home.

Ascending by one of the stone staircases in the thickness of the wall, we enter a spacious chamber with a limestone mullioned window opening towards the bay, through which a flood of light poured from the sun, now sinking towards the western sea.

In the opposite wall of the castle a window of similar structure looked out upon the sedgy swamp to the eastward. This apartment was divided by an oak screen into a sleeping and a living room. Oak wainscotting lined the walls, which were here and there adorned with old flags taken from wrecks or captured in war—faded flags of several nationalities, all suggesting strange histories, could they but speak of the scenes over which they had last waved.

From the groined stone roof hung two

silver lamps, and on the embroidered seats lay some rich silks. This was the women's apartment, where no man ever entered except he was a near relative.

The only openings in the southern and northern walls of the castle, which were those most exposed to attack, were loopholes or arrow slits, which gave some dim light to the passages in the thickness of the walls.

Leaving the women's apartment by a door in either window niche, we can ascend to the floor above by one of these hidden stairways.

Here several small chambers, occupying the whole width of the castle, provided sleeping accommodation to the men of the household, and from these there was easy access to the battlemented roof.

From this lofty view-point we can look down on the glassy bay inside the islands, where men in boats were busy loading the ship, the still evening air broken by their shouting and the creaking of pulleys and clatter of oars. On the land side the

castle bawn or court was protected by a swamp and afforded room for outoffices of various kinds—stores, stables, and the dwellings of the Scotch warders of the castle. Standing as the castle did between a swamp and the shore of the creek, the most vulnerable points in its position were the approaches from the north and from the south. Here walls and loop-holed towers stood as outworks, but the real strength of the fortress lay in the immensely strong masonry of the keep and in the fact that the owners held command of the sea. Outside the fortifications were numerous skin-covered cabins of the kerne, herdmen, and such like, whose business it was to tend the cattle on the islands and on the vast pasturages which extended inland, or, when occasion required, to take matchlock, pike, or battle-axe, and man the galleys for any desperate undertaking. On the outer fortifications several pieces of cannon known as falcons were mounted, and on the battlemented keep two long Spanish

four-pounders of brass shone bright in the sunshine.

Kilmeena Castle, though not so large as many of those the ruins of which one sees in the more central portions of the country, was a fortress of no mean strength, and stood there defying the invader and both protecting and dominating the people who looked up to it as the centre of their world.

Centuries before the time we are speaking of, after the first Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, William De Burgo Fitz Andelm, an English baron, was granted the whole of Connaught, including, of course, the lands of the O'Malleys. This family took the name of MacWilliam and became Irish. They adopted the language and laws of Ireland, intermarried with the O'Malleys, O'Flaherties, and other septs, and identified themselves so completely with the country in which they lived, that now the MacWilliam Eighter ruled a great part of Mayo as if he were an Irish chief. None of his family could speak English, and they maintained their power by fighting or by temporary

treaties with neighbouring chieftains. The hold of the MacWilliam on this territory was based on sanctions in no respect different from those of Irish chieftains around him, except in this one particular, that MacWilliam's claim to the whole territory of Connaught, occupied by various chiefs, had originally been ratified by the English Crown. Owing, however, to their having taken part in rebellions, these rights had practically been forfeited, and Anglo-Irish with Irish were now combined in common hostility to English rule, English law, and the new form of religion which England had recently adopted.

All these chieftains levied taxes, of which the most important were *coyne* and *livery*, from their dependents, and they raided their enemies.

The money obtained by the O'Malleys by such means, as well as that derived from trade and from the extensive flocks and herds held by their tenants, enabled them to hire Scottish soldiers, who, coming from the western highlands and islands, were

equally skilful on sea and on land. These mercenaries were sailors and soldiers combined, and, with an equal number of native gallowglasses forming the body-guard of the chief, accompanied him on expeditions or acted as warders of his castles when necessity arose.

In the women's apartment, when the first interest of the arrival had subsided, the ladies discussed the latest news from Dublin while their fingers worked busily at the banner made of strong French silk, which, bearing the Sea Horse of the O'Malleys, was to float proudly from the stern of the new ship. They dwelt on the recent struggle with the Burkes, and Mc-William was evidently no favourite ; but Mida O'Ruarc, a fresh-looking girl of twenty-five, praised O'Connor Roe.

"Had it not been for him," she said, "there is no knowing how long the dispute would have lasted. He and Teige settled the whole thing."

Grace looked interested, because Teige, her brother, as the leader in all difficult expeditions, had hitherto been her ideal.

"Of course, Mida, it was Teige settled everything," one of the others interposed, and, with a merry twinkle in her eyes, added, "and he may have more to settle ere long."

Mida, not displeased, blushed, and changed the subject by describing MacWilliam's, and especially young Richard Bourke's prowess when he came to the help of her people on one occasion, when Government troops had raided Leitrim.

All worked busily at the embroidered hem of the great banner till sunset, and then separating to attend to various interests about the castle, they did not meet again till the horn was blown for the evening meal.

The lights flared from the central hall, and soon the party assembled round the table. The viands were served, the flagons filled with ale or red wine ; and, with much talk and chatter, the meal proceeded. Then the rich Spanish wine was produced, the glasses of Dutch make filled, and Captain Antonio, of the good ship called by the

name of *The Twelve Apostles*, took his share in the merriment, though his knowledge of the Irish tongue was scanty and had to be helped out by Spanish phrases with which a few of the company were well acquainted. Teige O'Malley was absent, and supposed to have left for the west of North Mayo with his galley, to lie in wait for an English ship which had been reported to have sailed for Galway. His chances of a prize were discussed with interest, and all drank success to his venture.

Angus MacDonnell, chief of the Scotch fighting men in O'Malley's pay, was one of those at the table. Though no more than five-and-twenty years of age, his broad shoulders and cheery yet firm expression pointed him out as a foe to be feared or a most valuable ally. The meal finished, MacDonnell left the table to inspect the guards, and later on, with Owen O'Malley, and Grace accompanying him, strolled out in the starlight, visiting the look-out tower, at the entrance of the creek, and after a few friendly words with the kern who watched there, returned to the keep for the night.

CHAPTER IV.

INNISH BOFIN PIRATES.

WE must for the present leave Clew Bay and its people and join the French bark *Geneta* as, with a light easterly air, she rounds Slyne Head and moves slowly northward. Captain de Vela felt pleased at having so safely cleared this dangerous headland, and hoped that all the risks of the voyage were now over. Clare Island was in sight; its high peak standing out clear above the sea haze on the northern horizon. The sun was sinking towards the west. The *Geneta* was now three miles west of Innish Shark, and the sails flapped against the rigging as she rolled on the long ocean swell. The flood tide carried her slowly onwards to where the sea was

dotted with boats from Innish Bofin, where for over a year a Spaniard named Bosco conducted the fishing ; these West of Ireland grounds being not only the most accessible, but also safest from molestation. He had established himself as a kind of petty chieftain or pirate, and was not always friendly disposed to the O'Malleys and O'Flaherties of the neighbouring mainland.

A Spanish fishing vessel or zabra of about 60 tons was in sight collecting the fish from the boats as they were captured. Huge ling and cod were taken freely at the setting of the sun. The boats, many of them made of raw hide stretched over a skilfully built wicker frame, were not at anchor, but kept in their position by two men rowing while the others fished. As the bark approached, two or three crews coiled down their lines and pulled alongside, offering fish for sale, and asking for brandy in return. Some of the men stepped on board ; then more boats arrived, and more men came up the side. At first Captain de Vela saw no reason for alarm, but some Spaniards who were with the

natives in the larger boats became insolent, and, seeing that they had numbers on their side, insisted on the hatches being removed so that they might ransack the cargo.

The captain looked anxiously for a breeze, but there was not a ripple on the sea. He held a brief consultation with his mate, and his crew looked anxious, but it was decided that it would be unsafe now to attempt to expel the fishermen by force. While this was proceeding on the main deck, the boatswain, with some men on the forecastle, loaded a demi-cannon, and, turning its mouth aft, signalled to the captain that they were ready if he would only get his party out of the way and give the word to fire.

This action was immediately understood by the angry crowd, who, seizing the captain, held him where he stood, and called on the men to leave the gun or they would cut the captain's throat. Knives were drawn; the canvas was torn from the main hatchway; the hatches started; and bales of soft goods were seized and thrown

about the deck, the marauders searching everywhere for wine or brandy.

One small keg was discovered, and being quickly disposed of added fuel to the flame, and matters looked dangerous for the crew of the bark. The mate now sprang into the open hatchway as though to help the robbers, but knowing where the powder was stored he uncovered some barrels, and at the same moment pulling out a pistol pointed it at the barrel, singing out to the Spaniard, who seemed to be the leader of the party, to get his men out of the ship or he would blow them all up. The words were scarce uttered when his brains were dashed out by another Spaniard who stood above him on deck, and the pistol going off, instead of exploding the powder, shot an Irish kern in the leg, making him roar lustily. Hearing the shot and the howls of the wounded man, and thinking that a general fight was going on, the Irish on the forecastle sprang upon the boatswain and his men, a desperate struggle ensued but was soon ended, for the French-men were stabbed and flung overboard.

A general massacre of the crew seemed imminent, when the dark shadow of a high sail came along the port side, and one of Bosco's galleys, urged by twenty oars, made fast to the fore-rigging. Alonzo Bosco himself sprang on board, and ordered the fishermen into their boats, which order was instantly obeyed. Owing to what had occurred he could not permit the vessel to go on her way. There being no wind he ordered the galley ahead to tow; and thus the galley and her prize approached Bofin. The breeze did not freshen up until they were off Rusheen Bay; then the *Geneta*, accompanied by the galley, slid quietly over the dark water, and about midnight, by the light of the moon, now in its first quarter, and steered by hands well accustomed to the narrow entrance, she glided round the rocky shore into the little harbour and let go her anchor.

The entrance of Bofin Harbour, not more than a hundred yards across, was guarded by a low fort: in later years it was much strengthened, but is now a mere ruin.

An inner basin, which could only be entered at high water, enclosed by a small islet, was further protected by a fort on the island, above which the masts and long, tapering yards of the feluccas, come for the fishing, were visible in the moonlight. As the tide was now ebbing, no attempt was made to take the bark further than the outer harbour. Leaving a strong guard on board, Bosco landed at the head of the creek, where, under the light of torches, men were hard at work coopering up casks of oil which was to form part of a cargo for *The Twelve Apostles*, when she should call.

After some discussion with two of his most reliable skippers, Bosco determined to land de Vela and his men, and keep them safe in the fort. He also decided to do nothing further with the ship or her cargo until he should see how events would turn out. These arrangements being complete, before daybreak Bosco retired to his quarters on shore.

The sun was high in the sky when he arose. His first thoughts on waking were

naturally about the capture of the night before, and he mounted the rampart to look down on the little harbour. There lay the bark, her black hulk and tapering masts reflected in the water, the arms of the guards, as they leaned on her rail, sparkling in the sunlight. Boats were passing in from the fishing grounds, and a greater number than usual had lingered after landing their fish.

At one place particularly a crowd of islanders seemed gathered round a speaker, who waved his hands and pointed now and then with threatening gestures towards the fort. Something was going forward which needed investigation. Bosco, taking no more precaution than to tell his musketeers to keep a close watch on him from the rampart, strode out the gate, and, traversing the rocky shore, drew near to the speaker. Seeing him approaching, the orator addressed him directly.

"We are here," he said, "all hearty, ready men; ready to fish for you, ready to work for you—aye, and ready to fight for you! so long as you treat us fairly. But

the bark is ours, and not yours, and "with an awful oath, "we shall not stir from here till her cargo is divided between us, and every man here gets his rights"

A shout of applause followed, and when it subsided Bosco set himself to reply.

He had often been in difficulties before, and the crisis now was of a kind which he thoroughly enjoyed, although fully aware of its gravity. He felt sure that if a division of spoils took place he could easily retain the guns and ammunition for himself. If he breathed a word of the O'Malleys' claim on the whole cargo, this plan might be knocked on the head, as many friends of the O'Malleys were amongst the crowd, and there was no knowing what view they might take of it.

To allow himself to be forced into compliance with the demand of the fishermen might get him out of the difficulty. But against this would be the loss of prestige, which was of much importance to him.

At length he spoke thus: "I know, men, that ye boarded the bark first, but I also

know that had it not been for the quickness of one of my men both ship and yourselves would have been blown up ere ye had done. It was he saved the ship and your lives, so the prize is ours and not yours—no division shall take place. I will protect her, on chance of settling with her owners, and when I consider a sufficient time has elapsed, do with her and her crew what seems to me to be best."

With this he turned on his heel, and taking no notice of the angry interjections of the crowd, walked slowly back to the fort. Unknown to the fishermen, his safety was guaranteed by a minion loaded with grape, beside which a Spaniard sat with lighted match, keeping a watchful eye on his chief. Slowly Bosco entered the gateway of the little fortress, and immediately afterwards a boat containing ten of his armed men proceeded to the bark, which lay at anchor one hundred yards from the wall of the fort, and busied themselves on board.

On shore some of the men resumed

their work, splitting and cleaning fish, while others, whose task was over when the fish was landed, hung about in groups, arguing the question about the bark, but apparently arriving at no decision as to a plan of action.

At last, as the afternoon advanced, instead of going home to prepare for their night's fishing, as some of the crews had done, the men gathered around the speaker of the morning, and with cheers determined to adopt his advice, and seize on their prey by force of numbers. The quantity of brandy on board was described in glowing terms, and with one consent they rushed to their boats, and in five minutes the flotilla surrounded the bark. Bosco, knowing well the risk of a fight with five times the number of men, who would become mad with desperation if a blow was once struck, came to the rampart and called for a further parley. Two fishing boats approached, the half-naked crews, armed with long knives and axes, looking fierce enough.

Bosco commenced, "What does all this mean? If you want to fight I am ready, and if I raise my hand my guns will fire and kill you. If you try to take the ship I will sink her first."

"Bosco," said the leader of the attack, "we mean to have the bark, and if you fire some of us may be killed, but then neither you nor any of your men will be alive when the sun rises to-morrow morning."

Bosco saw that he stood on the brink of a volcano, and he now wished that he had moved his three vessels from the inner harbour on the morning tide. The two at sea were probably twenty miles away. The thought of the zabras seemed also to strike the fishermen, and saying that they would give a final answer in half an hour, they withdrew, and calling on the other boats to follow, retired up the harbour. "For the ships!" was shouted from boat to boat, and with the tide sweeping the flotilla through the narrow entrance, they were quickly within the inner basin. The few Spaniards

in charge of the galley fled to land on seeing them approach, and made their way as quickly as possible to the fort for safety. In another instant fire was procured, and the oars being broken into splinters a fire was ignited in the cabin, and Bosco soon saw tongues of flame and volumes of smoke rising in the twilight. One Spaniard who had been captured was now sent to Bosco with an offer from the men to desist from further destruction if the bark were handed over quietly.

His reply was, that, as he was averse to spilling blood, the cargo should be divided, and if four boats only returned to the fort he would arrange the terms with the leaders.

This course was quickly adopted, and under the glare of the burning vessel the four boats rowed back, and it was agreed that the brandy and silk and cloth should be taken by the islanders ; the ship, with her guns, ammunition, and wine remaining in possession of Bosco. Any money on board to be divided equally. Three of the chief fishermen, whom he should name, to enter

the fort and be detained as hostages till the bargain was completed.

This latter part of the bargain was the only one over which there was some wrangling. The three chief men feared not only for their personal safety, but also that their share in the plunder would be ignored.

Bosco stood firm, for he knew that the men would be forced to deliver themselves up rather than cause further delay. Accordingly, after an angry discussion, the boats approached the beach, and the three hostages, making a virtue of necessity, stepped on shore, and were taken in charge by a file of mail-clad Spaniards, who came down to meet them. Arrangements were soon completed, and the boats approached the bark out of the darkness. Torches threw a wild glare over the scene, and the division of the spoil began.

CHAPTER V.

O'MALLEY TO THE RESCUE.

WHILE these events were proceeding at Innish Bofin, there was also some stir in Clew Bay. Teige O'Malley had returned to Kilmeena with his galley, having fallen in with a rich prize off Donegal Bay: a British bark with a valuable cargo and a quantity of money intended for merchants in Sligo.

The goods were being transferred to a long store-house inside the fortification, and Grace was enjoying her brother's company and his stories of adventure, when a boat from Clare Island came up the bay. Grace went quickly down to the water's edge to get the first news from her old home, and to learn of Eileen's welfare, and

to know whether they were coming up for the day of the launch.

Dowdary Roe O'Malley stepped ashore, and quickly answering her inquirers, asked to see her father. The news he brought was that a Clare Island fishing boat had arrived from Bofin that morning, saying that a French ship had been captured by Bosco and taken to Bofin Harbour. It was concluded without doubt that this was the vessel the O'Malleys looked for.

A council of war was quickly convened in the great hall, and it was determined to dispatch one of the armed galleys to Bofin. Teige's men must return to their homes, but a fresh crew was speedily collected with thirty Scots. Preparations were made to start that same evening with Teige in command. The castle yard was soon the scene of bustle and excitement. Arms were got ready, and ammunition was brought from the cellars beneath the keep. The captain of the Spanish vessel intended to drop down with the next tide and proceed to sea, but as he was first bound for Bofin, it

was urgently necessary to prevent him, for it would not do for him to give the alarm. Accordingly, Mida O'Ruarc undertook to invite him ashore. It was a sad trick to play on his gallantry, but it was quite successful. When all fair means of detaining him on shore had failed, he was shown courteously into the dungeon beneath the castle, a brief explanation being made as to the painful necessity his captors were under.

When the dungeon door closed with a bang, his terror and indignation knew no bounds. He shouted till his throat cracked, in hopes of attracting the attention of some friend, he cursed in Spanish, French, and Irish; and then, picturing all sorts of tortures in store, sat himself down on an old iron chest.

He had now come to discern horrible fetters lying about; but when matters were just at their worst, and despair had well nigh dulled his alarm, the grating of the cell-door opened, and he heard Mida's clear voice addressing him in fair Spanish, and asking was he ready for food. Hoping to prolong the interview, he said he was, though food was

at the time farthest from his thoughts. Then the door opened, and Mida entered.

"Oh ! what have I done ? Why am I here ?" he piteously began. "Am I to be put to death ? If so, dear lady, spare me from torture. Spare me, for God's sake ! For the sake——"

"The door stands open," she said.

He thought that perhaps he was dreaming. She must be his guardian angel ; and he was not certain what act of worship would be most suitable for the occasion. It was plain truth, however. He was free, and he laughed at the hospitable board, and quaffed his wine that night as if nothing had happened, but the tide had ebbed, leaving his ship aground, and the galley was by that time well on her way to Bofin.

But to return. Grace, when she saw the fighting men paraded, wished that she, too, might have been a man like Teige, and go on this business instead of him. She had often argued to herself on similar lines, but now her ideas had advanced a step, and she came to the conclusion that although

she was *only* a woman, she would go too. And she quickly made her plans. She knew well that if she spoke of her idea to any one she would only be laughed at and hindered. Undoubtedly there was danger in the enterprise, but this only fired her imagination and rendered her more anxious to share it.

As the evening drew on, the west wind, which had all day made Clew Bay sparkle with wavelets, died away, and a flat calm succeeded.

The crews expected a breeze off the land about nightfall, but anyway, at sunset they should start.

Grace, watching her opportunity, and finding that she was not much thought about in the general excitement, slipped from the castle unobserved, and confiding her secret to the Innish Clare boatmen,—whom she knew she could trust—she induced them to row her off to the galley. Here she quickly found a place for concealment, and making herself as snug as possible, bided her time. It seemed endless time to

wait, but at last she heard the boats bump alongside, the tramp of men as the crew came on board. She heard also a good many coarse oaths and general banter as the men set to their task. Above all, she heard her brother's voice giving his commands. Then sounded the running out of oars, and as a faint cheer came from the land, the thirty oars splashed into the water. She heard the ripple against the vessel's side, and she knew that they were under weigh. It would not, however, be safe as yet to leave her hiding-place, for Teige would only send her back in one of the boats. The oars creaked as the rowers chanted a low, monotonous song of the sea, then the vessel rose and fell on the swell, which told her that they were now clear of the islands. Darkness was coming on. From her hiding-place Grace could see the ruddy after-glow of the sunset. Then the ripple against the side changed to heavy splashes, telling of a freshening breeze. The high-peaked sail was hoisted, the oars were run in, and the vessel, gently heeling over to the breeze,

dashed onward towards the open sea. Teige, sitting on a bench near the stern, watched the steersman, while MacDonnell paced the deck, the hilt of his claymore sparkling in the faint starlight.

Clare island was now on the starboard beam, and the white foam of the swell breaking on Mweem More was visible on the port hand. At this moment Grace came out from her lair, and, to the utter amazement of her brother, took her place beside him on deck. His first words, however, expressed pretty plainly his vexation at her being on board. To land her on Innish Clare would lose over two hours, and time was precious.

MacDonnell urged this course, in spite of the loss of time, but Grace implored them not to do so. She had come not to get in the way, but to take her chance with the rest, and she maintained she had a right to do this. Teige's feelings were a curious mixture of admiration and annoyance, but, taking her at her word, he promised not to consider her in any way, but act just as if she were not there. By

this time the sheets had been hauled aft, and the galley's head directed to Innish Bofin.

The moon rose, and passing Caher Island, with its little anchorite cells, they saw the serrated mountains of Connemara in sharp outline against the night sky. At midnight the northern end of Bofin was reached, and with sails lowered the galley entered Rusheen Bay. The unusual glare in the direction of the harbour made Teige fear for the safety of the bark, but sending the small boat ashore to gain information, two of the islanders came off and told how the case stood. The galley was now headed for the harbour, and as she approached a trusty crew was landed with a messenger to desire Bosco to deliver up the bark unharmed or to take the consequences.

The approach of the galley had already been noticed, and Bosco was ready with his reply.

"Tell O'Malley," he said, "that the natives have seized the bark, not I, and my force has not been strong enough to

defend her. Let him come and take her."

Bosco's next order was to withdraw his men from the bark at once. And then quietly he let the three hostages escape. They, finding themselves free, eagerly leaped into a boat which lay conveniently by the shore, and were quickly in the *mélée*, for such it now was on board the *Geneta*. A cask of brandy had been broached, and with curses and oaths the men struggled over the division of the spoils. It seemed almost a miracle that a terrible explosion did not follow, as lights flared wildly, and a fire seemed inevitable. While this pandemonium was at its height a voice from the shore shouted, "The O'Malleys! the O'Malleys!"

The cry was re-echoed on board. In an instant the crowd leaped from the hold. Some sprang to the rigging. "The O'Malleys!" was shouted from a man on the bowsprit, as he saw the long dark galley sweep round the Gun Rock, the oars flashing in the moonlight and the glow of

the torches glinting on bright pikes and axes, as her crew stood ready to board. A few seconds only passed ere she shot alongside. MacDonnell and his Scots were foremost. A panic followed on the onset. No resistance was attempted. Fear seized the islanders, and in the rush for the boats two fishermen were drowned. The *Geneta* had thus, to all intents and purposes, in less than forty-eight hours, changed ownership three times. Few of the fishermen would dare to take side against the O'Malleys, while others feared to be recognised in the business at all. Some of them afterwards said that they would not have given in, only that they saw standing at the tiller of the galley a tall, slight girl, clad in dark yellow, which made them think that O'Malley's own daughter was on board.

In less than an hour all was quiet, and when Teige, with MacDonnell and Grace, visited Bosco in his fort, De Vela and his men were liberated, and explanations made with which Teige saw it was wiser to be satis-

fied ; then, the westerly breeze being fair, they lost no time in getting to sea, and the *Geneta*, free from further danger, sailed under convoy of the galley for Clew Bay. It was late the next evening, owing to head winds, when they reached their islet-sheltered port, and the *Geneta* was anchored off the place where the new vessel was being built, and left in charge of O'Malley's kinsmen of Belclere Castle, which was close to the south side of the bay.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MACWILLIAM EIGHTER.

As the day approached for the launch, Kilmeena began to assume festive attire. Guests arrived from far and wide. Several families of the Bourkes sent their contingents, amongst whom Richard, commonly known as Richard an Iarain, recently elected *tanist*, or successor, to the Mac-William Eighter, was the most prominent figure. He was of a strong, powerful frame, and in his saffron-dyed doublet and steel morion looked the ideal of manhood as he sat on his shaggy steed, which he rode according to Irish custom, without stirrups.

Rumour, ever busy about such personages, coupled his name with the daughter of O'Malley ; the union of two such im-

portant houses being obviously an object worth aiming for. Rumour often said, however, that she was too good for him, and that he was not all that he seemed. These rumours, however, fell in with the ordinary algebraic formula of such gossip. The facts may vary with the times, but the relations between them are ever the same, and every action, look, and gesture of the parties was noted with interest.

On the bay before the castle a galley belonging to O'Flahertie of Bunown lay at anchor. Donal had come to take command of his ship as soon as she was launched. A ship was expected from Donegal with some of the O'Donnells of Tyrconnell, for it was known that matters of deep importance were to be discussed.

Near the fortress rhymers and bards were housed, the castle and its precincts being as full as it was possible for it to be packed.

As the evening closed in the Clare Islanders arrived, and great was the joy of Grace when she flung her arms round Eileen's neck and half smothered her with kisses.

Everything that had happened since they parted was gone over again and again. Grace told of her expedition to Innish Bofin, which Eileen listened to with wondering eyes. "How I should like to have seen MacDonnell lead his men to board the ship!" she said, "but I am glad none of our people were killed. It would have been terrible if he had slipped as he leaped on board. Some of the islanders might have stabbed him."

"But you forget that they knew who we were," Grace replied with a certain tone of pride to her voice.

"Yes, I forgot that," said Eileen. "But how sad about the French officers having been killed!"

As they walked up to the castle from the place where the boat grounded they passed through some of the kerne's houses. Oxen had been slain, and all, down to the lowest horse boy, were preparing for festivity.

"Shall I see MacWilliam to-night?" asked Eileen.

"Oh, yes," said Grace, "he is here, and

so is Donal O'Flahertie," she added, with a roguish air.

"I hear great things of the MacWilliam."

"He is not MacWilliam yet," said Grace, as if anxious to dispose of the subject. "He has only been elected tanist quite recently. His people were English in the beginning, and they may be English again, if I mistake not."

"Oh, how could they?"

"I don't know, I am sure," said Grace with a sigh; "but when one hears of the bad work being done by the English, I wish I were a man, for I believe it only wants a strong arm and a fixed purpose in some person to make every one join and hunt them from the country. There is a good Spanish Friar here, who says that his country is going to have a great war with the Queen of England, and then all the bad work will stop; he is such a good man, you will see him to-morrow."

"I don't know anything about it," said Eileen. "It seems strange to me why people go fighting at all; and what comes of it?"

"He says," replied Grace, "and I quite

believe him, that people must fight for what is right, or our holy religion would be lost, and God would hate us. And you and I and all the poor people around us would be hunted from our homes. There are bad people in the world, we all know, who have to be put down, and the English are the worst. All they have got they have taken by murder and robbery, and it is a good thing for any one to take it from them. Oh, I wish I were a man!"

"I wish, Grace," said Eileen, "you would let these things alone. You are not a man, and I am very glad you are not. There are fine men in the world, and we shall see some of them to-morrow. There is Richard Bourke."

"Oh, don't talk to me about Richard Bourke! Why did you not say Angus MacDonnell of the Glynnés, Eileen?"

Eileen blushed a little.

"How lovely the sunset is!" she said as they stood on the castle steps looking out through a vista of islands. A tiny bit of ocean was just visible, and was now shining,

as was the narrow channel and broad lagoon before them, like molten gold. The islands cast purple shadows on the still waters. Flocks of sea-birds trimmed the shore, left bare by the ebbing tide, while the grey limestone of the keep glowed in the ruddy light and stood out nobly against the cold grey mists forming over the swamps in the valley behind it.

Twilight darkened into night. Lights glared in the hall and shone on the polished limestone flags set diamond-wise, and swept clean for the dance. The meal was set, and with many a cheery laugh the party assembled, while in the courtyard servants were busy conveying viands to and fro for the feast.

The meal over, the tables were cleared and some of the younger members of the party strolled into the cool night air. The moon had not yet risen, but the stars shone brightly, and the western horizon still glowde with warm light. On the wide beach of wet sand and oyster shells numbers of wild fowl were feeding, and their shrill cries were answered from every part of the bay. In

the huts of the kerne lights twinkled, and Grace, with Bourke at her side, wandered across the moat, through which a small stream found its way into the sea, and up the hillside beyond. The little world below was absorbed in bustle, and thought not as yet of the couples who wandered forth where the fancy of the moment directed.

Having gained the brow, from which they could look down on the castle on one side, and away to the open sea on the other.

"Grace," said her companion, as he pointed towards Clare Island, "there is the scene of your late adventure. I cannot tell you how I felt the risk you ran, it was too much."

"Risk of what?" asked Grace, in a most indifferent tone.

"Why, risk of being killed, of course."

"Of being killed! Why it was the eagles that were killing the sheep, and the sheep were worth a great deal to the people, and no one would kill them, so I did, that was all. Some think this mark in my forehead is the worst part of it."

"I think nothing of that," said Richard Bourke. "It will be soon quite healed up and forgotten."

"I doubt it. Anyway, I care little whether it is or not," replied Grace. "Do you think it would ever prevent people caring for me if it looked as it does now?"

Bourke, who was at the present moment brimming over with admiration for Grace, was not an unprejudiced critic, and he felt ready to swear that he loved her all the more because of it. But Grace, seeing what was coming, turned the conversation, and said she thought it was time to return to the castle and join in the dance.

A few minutes sufficed to bring them to the bright hall. The minstrel of the household was already filling the room with a plaintive melody on his harp, and two others, who had come for the evening, were ready to follow. Then a lively air was played. The dance commenced, and Grace, wearing a necklace of pearls, gathered from the streams of her own mountains, led off with the partner of her choice, Donal

O'Flahertie; while Eileen looked the picture of happiness as her golden hair flashed in the light in time with the music, and Angus MacDonnell was her companion. The harpers played their best. The merry laugh rang through the hall, and applause rose from those of the party who did not join, as one or other of the dancers distinguished themselves.

Richard Bourke and his partner soon gave in, he looked both bored and tired. Then other couples resumed their seats and were handed curiously fashioned glasses of Gascoigne wine.

At last Grace and Donal, on looking round, found that they only maintained the dance, and sat down amid peals of applause. The old retainers were overwhelmed with delight that O'Malley's daughter should have so ably upheld the credit of the household? and "wasn't O'Flahertie splendid." Some who watched the MacWilliam that was to be, said he was wild with jealousy, others that he was the best man there, and Grace should have danced with him.

Bourke quaffed the wine cup freely, and by its means restored himself to a certain amount of cheerfulness, and mustered courage to ask Grace for the next dance. With a compassionate smile she consented. She felt she had hurt his feelings, and was sorry, so now they sat side by side to listen to the bard, who stepped forth, and commencing with the air of one who knew his own importance, rolled forth his lay. The retainers, who had heard the same words many times before, nevertheless joined the company in applause as he dwelt on the great prowess of the Hymalia or O'Malleys of old. The attempts of England to impress its power on Connaught was treated with irony and satire. The new stanzas were eagerly waited for, and loud-toned approval followed on the lines which, after alluding to the MacWilliam and the prowess of his people, coupled his name with O'Malley and predicted the final triumph over England, and over all rivals in Ireland, and the greatness of Connaught ruled by a prince of the Hymalia. While this performance

was going forward Grace almost regretted having promised the next dance to Bourke, but as the harpers had now resumed their music and Grace, led forth by MacWilliam, took her place, a general feeling of admiration seized the assembly. It seemed a fitting acknowledgment of the inspiration of the bard, and the dance began.

Helped a little by the wine he had so freely drunk, MacWilliam glowed with triumph at the start. Spite of all his efforts, however, his burly frame was not suited for the exercise. The dance became faster and wilder, but when all others subsided exhausted, Teige O'Malley still kept the floor with Mida O'Ruarc. No sooner did this last couple sit down than Angus MacDonnell and two of his men sprang forward, and, with a flash of light from their bright claymores which they threw on the floor, commenced a dance to the sound of the pipes, which delighted the company immensely.

This was the last dance of the evening, and after it the ladies retired. On the tables were set flagons of wine and the usquebaugh

brought from the buttery, and while drinking deep they roared with laughter at the tales recited by the professional story-tellers summoned for the occasion.

The night was spent and the full moon and stars waning in the dawn when Owen O'Malley felt it time to break up the festivities. Some of the party retired to the sleeping-rooms, while others departed to the temporary quarters in the quadrangle, or flinging themselves on the benches fell into deep sleep, which soon ruled supreme, the only men awake being the sentry pacing the battlements and the guard on the ships.

A new day dawned—a day long looked for and long remembered. The servants were hardly astir and night watchers relieved before Owen O'Malley was busy in the courtyard seeing that all arrangements were made for the day. At the morning tide Donal O'Flahertie and Teige O'Malley were early on board their galleys, and took precautions to ensure their being afloat when required.

The weather was all that could be desired, as it is so often in this early summer season on the west coast of Ireland, and gay was the scene when the party left the castle. The only one disappointed was Eileen, for MacDonnell must remain at the castle with a guard, treachery being but too common in those unsettled times.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAUNCH.

THE tide was low, so the galleys lay at some distance from the castle to insure their being afloat, and small boats conveyed the party on board. Many a cheery word and merry laugh passed from boat to boat, a hearty shout rose from the guards on the castle walls, and the oars striking the water in unison, the spray flew sparkling in the sunshine, and the galleys sprang forward towards the entrance of the little harbour, Owen O'Malley's craft, with Teige at the helm, taking the lead. Beyond the harbour, but still within the outer fringe of islands, other boats were waiting. One bore a number of the good friars of Borrishoole;

another, a fine galley of the Bourkes, had on board William, surnamed the Blind Abbot, brother of Richard, and who, though still young, had proved himself to be a noted warrior and leader of men. His rowers were gallowglasses, whose polished axes shone in line above each side of the bows. With a mutual cheer of welcome the flotillas united and headed for the low land under Croagh Patrick, whose grey conical summit towered aloft in the clear sky, and was reflected in the still water.

As they neared the shore they saw that many boats had arrived. The fires were lighting at which food was to be cooked, and ponies were tethered in long lines which had carried retainers and well-wishers from all parts of the Owles, Iar Connaught, and even from Roscommon. Green fields of young corn were waving in the gentle breeze, safe from the destroying invader—safe because of their remoteness by land, and safe because the galleys held control of the sea. Above, a belt of dark forest still flourished, and the bare grey

stone of the mountain completed the view skywards.

The central point of interest was, however, the ship. There she stood on the ways, ready for the launch, the rippling wavelets, each passing beyond where the other broke, bringing the tide nearer and nearer. The sea seemed longing for the ship as a bridegroom for his bride. The Church, too, was present to bless the union, and the sun shone bright to make all feel happy. No one can foresee a human life, nor can any one the life of a ship; but we may feel sure that her commander that was to be, Donal O'Flahertie, was seeing future things. His thoughts were conjuring up the struggle the brave vessel would often have to face with the spirits of the deep and of the storm—triumph over enemies, victory in fight. A future for his ship full of adventure was even now present with him. Grace at least was one who shared these thoughts; and as Owen O'Malley beheld the ship with pride, it was not difficult to see that he too had more

thoughts within his rugged being than he could ever express.

Having met the foreman builder and heard that all was ready, Owen O'Malley with Teige and O'Flahertie set themselves to arrange for the ceremonials, in which the friars of Borrishoole and Murrisk were to take an important part. A Spanish monk was also present, and a mendicant friar, close cowled, who arrived on a shaggy pony, joined the party.

The tide would not be high enough for the launch until four o'clock, therefore the first thing to think of was to get the people fed. Hard as the carpenters had worked, the cooks wrought harder to have the meal ready. Whole carcasses of oxen had been hewn to pieces, and were now simmering in pots on the fires; and where other vessels failed, the meat was being stewed in sacks made of raw hide, supported on stakes over slow fires, filling the air with savoury odour.

The men, women, and children now crowded around, and set eager eyes on the treat in store for them. Loudly the praises

of O'Malley were sung and told. Where he led they would follow, and he and his—God bless them—were the men for the poor. The rye bread was unloaded from baskets, and the meat and broth were quickly served round. Then harpers, who had previously received sufficient refreshment, struck up stirring airs, and the sun looked down on a happy throng. The meal over, a bard stood forth, and after a brief introduction announced that the Spanish monk would address them. The boys and the girls regretted that there should be any pause in the fun, nevertheless they joined their elders, who, open-mouthed, crowded round to hear the strange man speak.

In excellent Irish, though with a foreign accent, he referred first to what had brought them all together, and wished prosperity to the undertaking.

“There are present,” he went on to say, “men who know of the cloud which hangs over this country. In spite of the joy and sunshine of this day, their hearts are heavy though their faces smile. Why is this so?

Is it not because there is an enemy in your land ? Is it not because all that you have in land or in goods or in cattle is proclaimed, and may any day be seized by the soldiers from Athlone or from Dublin ? Why are the cannon on the beach ready to be put into that fine ship ? Why are your cattle and your bread taken from you and your starving children, to feed Scots and such like ? Is it not because O'Malley has to fight for his life and for yours ? Already fair lands have been ravaged, already the homesteads have been pillaged. While I speak, at this present moment, ruthless soldiers are spearing the children before parents' eyes. That sun so bright above us is looking down on burning homes in some parts of this wretched country. Methinks I almost can hear the piteous cry ringing in my ears. Is there no remedy ? Is it possible that the young men I see here are satisfied to let their arms become weak with age, and never strike for the freedom of their country ? Are the young men cowards ? Would these bright girls I see here care

to be wives of such cowards?" Here a murmur spread through the crowd. The girls began to smile contempt at the men, and the men seemed inclined to revenge themselves on the speaker. He paused, but keeping his eye fixed on the crowd, he watched his opportunity, and in ringing voice exclaimed, "I don't believe it." There was a hush. "I believe all here are longing for the chance to strike for their country if only they knew how. I can tell you how, and that is my reason for speaking to-day. His Holiness the Pope and the King of Spain have looked with pity on this bleeding land, and they can help you. The King of Spain can land an army here (or anywhere) on this coast that will hunt your enemies into the eastern sea, hunt them back to where they came from, on one condition—that you and all men like you will welcome them on their arrival, and go with them to the glorious victory which is certain. Will any here say no?" He paused again. A hum of voices instantly arose as the men eagerly

discussed in hurried words what it all could mean. Those who seemed to know explained to those who did not. At last one man, more daring than the rest, shouted—

“What does O’Malley Dubhdarra say?” Another, “What do the MacWilliam say?” And another, “What do the clergy think?”

The Spanish monk, whose dark eye roved from group to group, was once more heard. All were now interested; even the girls, who had thought the fun had been unduly stopped, leaned forward with parted lips, and pushed nearer, intensely concerned.

“I will ask the clergy,” said the monk; and the old Abbot of Borrishoole with trembling voice replied—

“It would be a Holy War, and may God and His saints bless it!”

“What says O’Malley?” went on the monk, “and what say the Bourkes?”

O’Malley replied, “I fight now to protect my life and property, and to take from the enemy by every means in my power what is fair compensation for the loss to me and my people for the war I carry on.

Could we have but a peaceful land I would disarm my ships, I would throw open my castle ; I would wish to see my people safe on the sea, and their cattle safe on the land from bad men or from the common enemy. If the King of Spain can give us this peace I will join him and aid him. If not, we must go on as we are doing now till the end comes."

Richard Bourke and his kinsman Myler Oge too seemed for peace. The Blind Abbot and the O'Flaherties, however, stood aside, but Grace's face glowed with approval and her eyes flashed dark fire as Donal O'Flahertie in a loud voice proclaimed that he was for the King of Spain or for any one who would help them to exterminate the English, free the country, and restore the confiscated lands.

The mendicant, who had hitherto kept in the background, now stepped forward and raised his hand to speak.

" My brother from Spain," he said, " has spoken well, but the reply he has received is not clear—it is not, it seems to me, an

answer that he can take back to his own country with advantage. Let the chief men come forward, and man for man pledge himself that he will help the King of Spain in the Holy War."

There was silence for a minute, while all eyes were directed to the chieftains and their relatives, who seemed to hang back, doubtful as to whether to go further with the matter or delay its consideration. The Blind Abbot settled the question ; as he stepped forward he folded his brawny arms across his chest, and gave his pledged word never to lay down arms till victory should crown their efforts. All the principal men followed, and as O'Malley gave his pledge the people shouted, "O'Malley and Victory ! " The mendicant's eyes twinkled with such sinister satisfaction that Grace, who was standing close to him, was for the moment startled, but was reassured by the sublime dark features of the Spaniard, who looked as if he were silently thanking Heaven for the result of his mission.

For an hour the pipers played and the

young people danced. O'Malley, sitting on some logs, talked with his tenants who had come from a distance, and received from them rent in the form of young cattle, hogs, or corn, which were then lodged within the castle enclosure hard by ; or else he listened to tales of difficulty and distress and sickness, in consequence of which he agreed to delay payments ; and in some cases he settled to take a young man or a girl into the service of his establishment instead of goods which were his due. Disputes were settled. Cattle were issued to others as stock on the usual terms from the O'Malleys' own herds.

The mendicant busied himself among the groups, hearing their stories, giving advice, and receiving small alms. Shipmen were making all things ready for the launch, and arranging for the transferring of the stores from the French ship, so that the work might proceed on the morrow.

Thus the day wore on, until a gun fired, announcing that the tide had risen well, and that the launch should be proceeded with.

Near the bows of the ship a platform was erected, towards which the friars, led by the Abbot of Murrisk, now wended their way, chanting a psalm as they went. After they reached the platform, they stood for a while in silent prayer, and the people knelt, bare-headed, as the Abbot, with trembling voice, pronounced the blessing on the ship.

Donal O'Flahertie, with his men, stood on the forecastle looking to the anchors, and seeing that they were all ready to let go. Grace O'Malley, with Eileen and Mida O'Ruarc, occupied a position close to the Abbot, and as the blessing ended, her voice was heard clear above the murmur of the throng as she named the ship the *Dhudarra*. Instantly the blows of mauls and axes rose on the air as the carpenters knocked away the wedges. Slowly the ship slid down the ways, and as she gathered speed and rushed into the element, which rolled back in a wave from her stern, a shout arose from the people, which rang back from the cliffs of Croagh Patrick and died away in murmuring echoes while she ran

far out from land. When her way stopped, Donal let her trusty anchors plunge for the first time from her bows, and then she sat upright on the water, a pride to the builder and to the whole clan of the O'Malleys.

As the sun sank towards the west the assembly became thinner. The friars were gone. Those who had come long distances from inland were now wending their way homewards on ponies in single file. Festivity still continued into the twilight. The red wine still flowed from the casks which had been broached. Grace O'Malley and Teige, after visiting the ship, left. O'Flahertie on board, and then, joining their party, sped homewards over the still blue waters in the gloom. Already the Bourkes had reached the castle, already Eileen and Angus MacDonnell were pacing the outer ramparts together, as he took a last look at the defences before night closed in. The Spanish monk and the mendicant friar had also been asked to spend the night there ; and while the evening meal was in

preparation Mida O'Ruarc met Grace, and they turned shorewards together.

"Oh, Grace," said Mida, "I have great fears for that friar who came home with us this evening."

"Why," said Grace, "what is likely to happen to him?"

"Oh, not that, not that," replied Mida. "I do not know who he can be. He is not in the castle now, and I was coming out to watch him, because I am not sure if he is a monk at all. He was very pleasant and agreeable, I could not help liking to speak to him; but he asked me such strange questions, and I fancied that as he stepped from the galley I saw the glitter of steel on his breast beneath the cowl."

Grace remembered that she had seen a disquieting glance from his eyes, but while slightly alarmed by the idea, she urged on Mida not to be terrified by conceits of her imagination. The drawbridge was still down; so, crossing the moat, they passed to where the approach through the swamps to the southward was guarded by a low wall;

here they imagined they could see a figure in the shadow examining the outworks. They were standing in the bright moonlight, and were therefore conspicuously visible. Whether the man wished to be seen or not it would be impossible to say. Now that he was seen, however, he paced slowly towards them, telling his beads.

They saw it was the mendicant, and greeted him as he drew near.

“After the joy and stir of a happy day,” said the friar, “it behoves me to seek solitude that I may subdue my soul in prayer.”

“I regret that we disturbed you,” said Grace; “we had no intention of doing so; we will go on.”

They did so, and, passing between the towers of the outer defences, crossed the swamp and ascended the hill. It was another heavenly night, a keen northerly breeze made it a little cold; and there, under the stars, Grace and Mida held council on the monk. Their impressions that his conduct was suspicious were now

stronger than ever, and they determined to put their friends on their guard. So they hastened back to the castle. On entering the great hall they found that the meal was set and all were present.

After the viands were cleared the usual carouse commenced ; but Grace called Teige from the hall and divulged to him all her suspicions. He was inclined to make light of them, but said that they should have it all sifted to the bottom in the morning.

“ He is safe for the night,” he said, “ for no one can leave the castle.”

To make sure, as he ascended the parapet he glanced into the chamber which the friar occupied. The door stood ajar, and the kneeling form of the devotee was visible at the side of his little couch. In the same tower the Spanish monk was sleeping, but in his chamber darkness reigned supreme. An hour afterwards and the whole castle was wrapt in slumber, and no sound disturbed the night but the clang of the sentry’s arms as he paced round the walls,

the cry of the curlew from the shore, and the night breeze whistling through the towers.

The word had been passed by Teige before retiring that no one should be permitted to leave the castle in the morning until further orders, and the Scots took precautions to see that these orders were carried out. Next morning Owen O'Malley was early apprised of the suspicions afloat, and after brief council it was decided that the best course to pursue would be to question the Spanish monk about the mendicant, and they sent to him to request a conference. A difficulty now arose, because, the night having been sultry, the Spaniard on retiring to his couch had flung aside his habit and cowl, and these valuable portions of his attire could nowhere be found. For a Spaniard, much less a monk, to appear in *déshabille*, was out of the question. If it were stolen, O'Malley was for ever disgraced. Who had dared to interfere with his guest? Boiling over with rage and righteous indignation, he paced the courtyard. Richard Bourke and Angus MacDon-

nell were summoned, the guard called out, and a turmoil ensued which disturbed every inmate.

The Spaniard of course could not appear. The mendicant was also absent. All doubts about him were, however, forgotten in the presence of this fearful disgrace which had befallen the clan. O'Malley suddenly thought of him, and directed Teige to ask him to come forward and advise them in their new difficulty. Teige ascended to the tower, and found the door still ajar ; the lamp was still burning, and the monk was still crouched seemingly in prayer. He was quite astonished to find everything the same as it had been last night. Daylight was now, however, throwing a more searching light into the little chamber, and in the motionless form he seemed to see something strange. Stepping forward into the apartment, he seized the cowl and threw it back. There was no friar beneath it ! Nothing but a bundle of sticks and a small form, which was part of the furniture of the little room !

Moreover, the whole habit was not the brown robe of the friar, the white lining showed that it was that belonging to the Spaniard. The mystery was solved. Seizing the robe, Teige was quickly in the court-yard, and while it was restored to its lawful owner, the fact that the bird had flown required no telling, and the thought that they had harboured some dangerous spy found its way into every breast.

The doings of yesterday were still vivid in the minds of every one. They were each and all openly pledged against the Queen's Government. They were not ashamed of it. Why should they? But that the rupture would be precipitated if their deed were blazened abroad and discussed at headquarters, was self-evident. The danger to themselves and their people was intensified, and whatever they might wish to do in the way of raiding by land or sea, they had not the slightest desire to be brought into collision with the Queen's troops unless they had the King of Spain's help near at hand. O'Malley, entering the keep, signi-

fied to his kinsfolk and the Bourkes to follow, the matter being too serious to discuss before the retainers in the courtyard. Teige O'Malley briefly described the suspicious circumstances surrounding their late mysterious guest. His flight alone was sufficient to mark him as a spy. He must have left almost immediately after the meal of last night, and before Teige had delivered his orders that no one should leave the precincts of the castle. Some of the kerne living along the shore were now brought in. They said that it was five in the morning when the monk left the bay in a fisherman's boat, and that three of the young men who had been taken into O'Malley's service for the first time on the previous day had left with him. They heard the girls saying that these young men had spoken against O'Malley, and were, they believed, deserting, and were traitors. It was soon learned that these young men lived on the western slopes of Croagh Patrick, and had said that there ponies would be waiting for them. That the spy was

making for Galway was certain ; but by what route was a question. The company he left in made it likely that he would face westward for the pass over the mountains by the Dhu lough, or Black lake, and thus reach the long, deep inlet of the Killaries. Thence he might follow the bridle path through the Maam country, and, reaching Lough Corrib, take boat to Galway.

"We must cut him off at the Killaries," said the Blind Abbot ; "but he has had a long start."

"The wind is fresh from the north," said O'Malley. "If only the galleys were afloat!"

"Mine is all ready," said Murough O'Flahertie of Rinvyle, "as I intended to sail home this morning. Say the word, and I go."

"How are you off for men?" asked the Blind Abbot.

"Men?" said O'Flahertie. "As fine a lot as ever wielded an oar or swung a battle-axe. I have also four musketeers."

"That will do," said O'Malley ; "but if you undertake the venture, Murough O'Fla-

hertie, there must be no mistake. He must be brought back, dead or alive."

"Give me but five hours, with this breeze, and I will do my work," were O'Flahertie's last words, as he strode from the hall.

In less than half an hour the tall sail swung aloft, and the Rinvyle galley was splitting through the white wave-crests of Clew Bay. The wind at first was fresh, but as the sun rose to the meridian it died away, and as O'Flahertie stood at the helm he watched anxiously to windward to see the puffs from the hills coming like dark shadows over the sea. They came weaker and weaker. Now and then the sail flapped and the sheet fell in a bight over the lee side.

Then the oars were shoved out, but a spring tide running north with the flood opposed them. O'Flahertie was in despair, for the sun was low near the horizon ere he reached the islets off the Killaries and entered the narrow fjord.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MENDICANT.

WE must now follow the mendicant and his little party to where they landed on the southern shore of Clew Bay. Avoiding the scene of yesterday's festivity, where now busy hands were at work hauling spars and other gear on board the newly launched *Dhudarra*, they struck the coast line further to the westward, and there leaving the boat met a boy with two ponies. The boy, being told that he might keep the boat for himself, made but little inquiry as to where the party were going and where they would part with their steeds. They now started on a very uneven track leading westward, which sometimes ascended spurs from the mountain, and at other times kept close to the shore.

The friar mounted one pony, one of his companions bestrode another, while the other two walked. Rows of cabins were now and then met with, where small fields had been tilled, and the women curtseyed low as the holy friar rode by. After a slow march of four hours the track turned southwards towards a valley in the mountains, and here they paused at a cabin to partake of some food. The young men were now amongst their friends. It was, nevertheless, imperative that no secrets should be divulged.

"Then, where are ye going now?" asked a girl, as she set a bowl of oatmeal porridge on the table and filled a wooden flagon with milk.

"Dubhdarra," as they spoke of O'Malley, "has sent us to see this holy friar safe to the O'Flaherties."

"And you are coming back, then?" inquired the girl. "It was Moira oge was sorry for Shane going east to O'Malley; she thinks she has lost him entirely; but I will have her here to meet you

if so be that you step in here on your way back."

Shane winced a little at this, and the friar eyed him closely. Shane felt he had gone too far now to draw back. He would ere long be hunted for as a traitor if he stayed in the country, and be most surely hanged if taken.

It was his hour of trial ; with a great gulp he swallowed the weak emotion which swelled in his breast. And knowing that he was now pledged to be a soldier of the Queen, he replied—

" Perhaps it will be to-morrow night before I come back. Moira will see me then, and I won't leave her, if I can stay here at all."

The girl seemed satisfied. At all events she had no suspicions as to the true state of the case.

An old man in the chimney-corner was now conversing with the friar.

" It was bad times when I was a young boy, and it will be, I think, always bad times," remarked the old man.

"This is a gloomy view to take of life," said the monk.

"'Tis true, 'tis true," groaned the old man; "here we are feeding or starving on what we can grow in these bogs, and whether we feed or starve O'Malley has to get the best of it, or our boys or our girls if we cannot give that. The big men who keep his castles for him are the only men that can ever get rich, they only have rights of their own; they pay him, of course, but look what they have besides, and we can have nothing."

"Yes," said the friar, "it is the will of the Almighty; but why do all these fine young men stand it?"

"There is Myler Oge who cast some of his people off to shift for themselves when they asked him," said the man, "and he was good to them, and gave them stock when they left him. But what came of it? One night a band of the O'Connors came raiding the country and swept off all their great cattle and small cattle; three men and five of their children were killed the

same night; and when they came to Myler Oge and asked him to help them, he said he had nothing to say to them, and before a twelvemonth was out more than half were starved to death, and the rest scattered. There are two old men of them like myself left, and fed, for the love of God, by people nearly as poor themselves."

"It is a sad story," said the friar. "I have wandered far, and have been where the Queen's writ runs, and where men and cattle are safe."

"Yes," said the old man, "I have heard of the Queen of England, but her men in this country seem to be the worst of all, hanging and murdering the people."

"Far be it from me," said the monk, "to think anything good of a heretic, but I have seen where her rule is acknowledged the poor people are safer. But burning and hanging are for those who resist her."

"Well, well," said the old man, "I am going my way, and the times were bad, and always will be bad, so far as I can see anything."

The conversation having reached this satisfactory conclusion, and the meal being over, the sinking sun warned the party that they should be on their road. The young men lingered for a while with their comrades, but were careful to make no disclosure of their intentions. They experienced, however, no little difficulty in dissuading some of them from coming along to see them on their way.

The last cluster of the little bee-hive shaped cabins was now passed. The ascent became steeper, and the friar, who hitherto had ridden, dismounted to walk. Finding the monk's robe too heavy and too warm for a steep climb on a sultry evening, and there being no further need for disguise, Captain Denham—for so the sham friar really was—tossed the cowl on to the pony's back, and stood out in his buck-skin suit with nought of a soldier's outfit on him save the steel breast-plate, and a poniard in his belt. At Athlone and in Dublin he was well known as the head of what we would now call the Intelligence Department; and he had under-

taken this perilous journey, unarmed and alone, in order to learn the exact state of feeling amongst the people and the strength of the chieftains ; his only protection being the disguise he had kept up so well, and his complete mastery of the Irish language. His companions were a little surprised at the sudden disclosure of their leader, but felt no need for alarm, or any change in their determination. Before entering the defile leading to the pass they sat down to rest, and looked back over Clew Bay, with the high peak of Croagh Patrick on the right, Clare Island in front, and the rugged outline of Achill beyond tinged with the golden light of the sunset. No sound stirred the air save the lowing of cattle from the pasturages near the shore and the chatter of the Carrownisky river as it went on its way to the sea.

On reaching the summit of the pass they turned the ponies loose so that they might return home, and Shane O'Dowde, offering to carry the monkish robe which he flung across his broad shoulders, led the way for

the descent. The great mountain spurs of Muilrea stood up in dark purple against the evening sky, the stars began to appear, and the valley of the Black Lake lay before them buried in night. Shane, knowing every stone on the track from the pass to where the Bundorragha falls into Killary Harbour, found little difficulty in penetrating the gloom ahead ; so, trusting the party to his guidance, we must leave them for the present and return to Murough O'Flahertie and his mission.

The long, tapering yard had been lowered, the sail stowed, and up the still waters of Killary Harbour the galley sped swiftly, propelled by twenty oars. Killary Harbour is a deep cleft in the mountains ; Muilrea, the highest mountain in all Connaught, rises abruptly from the water on one side to a height of over 2,600 feet, and on the other the hills rise with almost equal steepness. The waters, as might be expected from the steep contour of the shores, are profoundly deep, and with a devious course this remarkable fjord penetrates the land to a distance of nine miles. At six miles from

the entrance the Bundorragha comes foaming into the sea from the north, delivering the waters of Dhu lough and of some smaller lakes.

To the mouth of this stream O'Flahertie directed the course of his galley. So deep was the gloom and so still was the water, that it was not easy to make out where lay the line of demarcation between the steep mountain-side and its dark reflection. As, however, no dangerous rocks or shallows exist, they skirted the shore, and on reaching the stream's mouth ran the galley aground close beside the rocks, where landing was easy. O'Flahertie ordered his men to land silently and search for any boats which might be about. Two boats only were found, in one of which there was one man, whom they closely questioned. He seemed disinclined to give any information, but so far as they could learn no party had crossed the harbour since sunset. O'Flahertie now entertained hopes that after all he might not be too late. The words of O'Malley were still in his ears, "There must be no

mistake—he must be brought back, dead or alive ! ” “ No mistake ! ” O’Flahertie repeated to himself, and set to work to carry out his plans immediately. At one time he thought to employ the musketeers, but the lighting matches were not suitable for such a service.

Directing these men, however, to watch the shore and prevent any one from leaving it, he took with him six of his best kerne, men who understood the work and could do it. They were armed with short swords and the axe of the gallowglass.

On leaving their vessel they followed O’Flahertie up by the course of the stream till they reached the sandy shore of Fin lough, in whose still surface the stars were reflected and sparkled like diamonds. Leaving this lakelet on their left they followed up the stream to Dhu lough, and skirting its shore, crossed the stream coming down a glen on their right, and there in the deep shadow of some rocks close to the lake shore they determined to wait. The stillness of night was now and then broken by

the rising of waterfowl from the lough, while the dark reflections of the mountains sparkled into silvery lines of light. So still was the night that O'Flahertie was obliged to issue his instructions beneath his breath as he posted his men in the best positions he could select. The path here was forced to the lake shore by a mountain spur, and the passage of the stream would cause some delay, here therefore was the place where the blow should be struck. His instructions were very brief. Repeating O'Malley's words, "There must be no mistake," he added, "none of the party we are waiting for must pass Glenumera alive."

They had not long to wait. Voices were heard discoursing. The sounds became louder, and then four dark figures showed on a rocky brow against the night sky. The monk was apparently leading, and they came on in single file. At the margin of the stream the leader paused for an instant. A sudden rush of men from the darkness ! A wild cry which split the silence into a thousand echoes ! A flash of starlight on

the axes, and Shane O'Dowde, in spite of the roll of the friar's cowl protecting him, fell without a groan into the stream cleft through the skull. A brief struggle settled one of his companions. Denham, who had, fortunately for himself, lagged behind, seeing that they were overpowered, struck up the mountain-side, and, lying amongst the rocks, heard sounds which intimated that his third companion had been seized, and feeling sure that he would inform on him to save his own life, fully estimated the gravity of the situation. Once or twice he had been in like difficulty before. Often he had been alone in an enemy's land. To reach the seashore quickly was now his only chance. Up the hill-side he climbed, taking advantage of every shadowing rock. He heard the men in pursuit, and by their voices judged that they followed the lake shore. He therefore doubled back and crossed the Glenumera higher up. In doing so he was observed by the man in charge of his captured companion, but, by the time this man by shouting had recalled his fellows,

Denham was safe under the crags of Ben Gorm, and was making for the sea-shore. Then downwards he crept, through boggy hollows and over slippery rocks. Sounds of voices ahead deterred him ; he advanced more cautiously. A dark figure stood on a projecting rock, and the red glow of the match and the sulphurous odour in the air were too familiar for him not to know what the danger really was. Striking along above the shore for some distance, he scrambled cautiously down to the weed-covered rocks, pausing now and then to listen. Now came a shout from the hill-side above, showing that his pursuers were still on his track. He stood on the dank seaweed, the dark water before him. His mind was, however, made up. There was no alternative. The dawn would soon break, and then all chance would be lost. Stepping quietly into the water, he plunged forward and struck out bravely for the farther shore. A line of phosphoric fire, as the sea creatures disturbed emitted their tiny lights, alone marked the track he had taken. He gave a low whistle ; it was heard and answered.

Shortly afterwards the clatter of hoofs announced that Captain Denham was with his friends, and that he should follow fast who would catch him and his troopers ere they reached Lough Corrib's shore.

Murrough O'Flahertie, rather crestfallen, sent a message by a fisherman to O'Malley setting forth the partial failure of his expedition, and then went on to his castle at Rinvyle.

It was late next evening when a boy, driving goats through the pass, came upon the dead bodies by the lake shore. He told the neighbours what he had seen, and the young men came next day to fetch them home for burial. Poor Shane O'Dowde's words were more true than he intended they should be. He did come back to his Moira oge, and her bitter cry, rising above the voice of the keeners, told of a broken heart as they laid his body in the ground. The old man remained crooning over the turf fire. He said, "The times are bad, and worse they are getting." Perhaps he was right.

CHAPTER IX.

A PRIZE.

WHEN the news of O'Flahertie's failure reached Kilmeena, Owen O'Malley flew into a furious rage and cursed Rinvyle, or *Ranmoyle*, as it was then called, and all its people. Richard Bourke and Teige O'Malley accused each other for not having seen to the business themselves, and even Donal O'Flahertie growled a good deal against his clansman. Grace felt certain that if Donal had been able to take charge of the affair no mistake *could* have occurred. Mida O'Ruarc alone appeared satisfied at the turn events had taken. When Grace charged her with being half-hearted, she said—

“ I am not half-hearted, and every one

knows that my people, while being more exposed to attack than most others, have never wavered in their resistance to the enemy; but that brave officer has done well, and I would not sleep to-night if I thought that my word had been the cause of his death."

"Why, you fell in love with a monk, I do believe," said Grace, laughing.

"Not a bit of it," replied Mida, her colour rising a little. "There are other ways we can fight the English, and he can tell them little more than what they knew before."

There was no helping the matter, however. O'Flahertie had failed in his errand, and there was the end of it. And the whole affair was soon forgotten.

The party at Kilmeena had broken up. Richard Bourke only remained on, but Donal O'Flahertie soon joined them, having brought the *Dhudarra* around to receive her final fittings.

In the evenings there was much dis-

cussion with an envoy from Tyrconnell, where O'Donnell, who recently had been fighting on the side of the English against Shane O'Neil, was now thinking of changing sides, or, at all events, throwing in his lot with those who still held out and looked to Spain for help.

The outcome of all these deliberations, in which Grace, always present, had come to take a prominent part, was that the *Dhudarra* should sail for France, and receive there a cargo for Killybegs, a port near Donegal, at the same time taking on board a confidential agent, commended to the care of O'Flahertie by the Spanish monk, who once more had appeared on the scene.

Some months elapsed before O'Flahertie sailed, and as Grace saw the tall masts pass out of sight beyond the islands, her heart sank at the thought that she and Donal should be so long parted.

The *Dhudarra* was not long gone on her maiden voyage when Teige O'Malley started in the largest galley with a contingent of Scots, whom he landed on the north coast

of Tyrconnell, near Sheephaven, his plan being to meet O'Flahertie early in the autumn, and in concert do something either for themselves or for O'Donnell, their powerful ally.

When they were gone, Grace, who would fain have accompanied her brother, went for a time to one of the Bourkes' castles on Lough Mask, where, on the borderland of English influence, she learned much of the intrigues of State, and her indignation was often roused by hearing how one chieftain after another was turning false to the great cause she had so much at heart. Many were trimming their sails to suit the coming breeze, instead of sticking to their course like brave men and true.

After her return to Kilmeena, Richard Bourke again appeared on the scene, and with him she visited some of the castles which were under repair, and all seemed going well between them, so at least it appeared to the old retainers, who were much satisfied with their own discrimination in having prophesied how things would go.

We must here for a time bid farewell to the peaceful scenes of the bay, tinged as they were with preparations for coming war, and learn how O'Flahertie had fared.

The fine weather of the late summer accompanied him on his voyage. The sky and the sea smiled on his ship, and in the early autumn a southerly breeze brought him up along the coast of Connaught, and though he longed for some excuse for delay as the well-known cliffs of Innish Clare hove in sight, he held on his course and safely entered Donegal Bay.

Sending his guns below hatches, so as to obliterate any too warlike appearance of his ship, O'Flahertie sailed boldly into Killybegs, and there proceeded unmolested to discharge his cargo, including as it did a large amount of ammunition and some guns for O'Donnell's castles.

While thus engaged, Hugh O'Donnell invited O'Flahertie to meet him at his fortress in Donegal, and Teige O'Malley, who had returned from his cruise on the north coast, was also present.

"I have been informed," said O'Donnell, after his visitors from the sea had been hospitably entertained, "that a ship will sail from Sligo as soon as the wind suits, bringing into Tyrconnell the new sheriff, one O'Gara, and his men. Now, I have guaranteed to the Lord Deputy the payment of such cess as is put on me and on my people, but I will have no sheriff sent into my country. I have fought for the English against Shane O'Neil, and I do not love war. But when I say I will have no sheriff I mean to be as good as my word. If the sheriff once lands in Tyrconnell I am bound to protect him, or else have nothing to expect but raids and ravages from my neighbours, fomented by commissions from Dublin. To you, then, I intrust this business."

Teige O'Malley's sunburnt face brightened as he saw prospects of an action. O'Flahertie replied—

"Yes, O'Donnell, we came here to help you, and the work you have asked us to do is what we are ready for. Say this much

more, however, to whom does the ship belong? Is she a Queen's ship, and whose is she to be if we take her?"

"The ship belongs to an Englishman, and may be yours if you take her. She has loaded a cargo for Bristol—wool, hides, and tallow, I believe. A rumour is about that her Majesty's ship *Antelope* is on her way to this coast, but no sight of her has yet been reported."

"How are we to know this merchantman?" asked O'Malley.

"That, too, I have found out. She is a bark with a new mizzen and two new cloths in her forecourse. Will that do you?"

O'Malley signified that it was sufficient, and as the tide was now ebbing, he prepared to leave. O'Flahertie, who stayed until nightfall, had further converse with O'Donnell, who explained to him his views, and they discussed O'Connor of Sligo's action in the affair.

"You know," said O'Donnell, "that O'Connor does not like paying rent to me for all his lands, and now that he has sub-

mitted to the Queen he sees a chance of setting me at defiance : hence his action in having O'Gara appointed sheriff, and of aiding the Government in the whole of this transaction. I will be even with him yet. You will therefore know how to deal with any men of his you meet, but I cannot openly declare war with him for the present."

"Yes," said O'Flahertie, "all of us who stand out for the freedom of our country must stick together, and our greatest enemy must always be the man who basely, and for his own ends, submits to the English."

They were quite agreed on these points, and as night closed in O'Donnell sent him away on horseback with three mounted kerne to guide him through the darkness.

Next morning a gentle north-westerly breeze took O'Flahertie out of the land-locked harbour, and there, heaving on the long swell rolling in from the Atlantic, he joined his consort. The tall yards of the galley swung lazily from side to side, the breeze being scarcely strong enough to keep the sails filled.

The sun was just rising, and flooding Donegal Bay with golden light. Away to the southward the mountains of Leitrim and Sligo raised their strange, flattened summits, like the fragments of some huge giant rampart, above the morning mists. The low islet of Innish Murray, famed for its sacred cashel, or enclosure, in which chapels and dwellings of various ages of Irish history stand grouped together, lay like a purple line on the sea. To the north-westward Slieve League towered in dark rock cliffs for 2,000 feet above the level of the ocean, bearing on its summit a cloudlet which glowed with the prevailing golden tints of the morning.

From Slieve League the breeze seemed to come in dark puffs across the water, and soon both galley and bark, lying down to the wind, were leaving a white track astern in the dark blue sea. After a run of three hours they neared the coast to the east of Sligo Bay, but in order not to let the galley be seen, lest her presence might alarm the captain of the merchantman,

O'Malley was directed to lower his sails and anchor under Innish Murray until night-fall. Meanwhile the *Dhudarra* should take advantage of the ebb tide, and, working to the westward, anchor outside Sligo bar as though waiting for tide or for a pilot. As ships went in those days, O'Flahertie's craft was a clipper, but without the help of the tide she could do but little to windward. Even with the ebb her progress was slow, and only after many tacks, and not until the sun had set, did she weather the rocks off Ballyconnell Point and enter Sligo Bay.

If the northerly wind should blow strong bad indeed would be her chance on such a coast, but the weather was fine, and the wind died away as the stars came out, and when the soundings showed suitable bottom O'Flahertie rounded his ship to and let go his anchor.

It was low water, and therefore no ship could leave Sligo for several hours. With the exception of two men on watch, all hands therefore retired to their bunks, and slept soundly to the music of creaking

spars as the ship slowly rose and fell and rolled in the long, easy swell.

In the galley, life presented quite another aspect. As twilight deepened the men were roused from their slumbers, the evening meal was served, and when the anchor was weighed the rowers took their seats on the benches, the long oars were run out, and over the dark water she glided, as with chaff and banter the men encouraged each other in the work. The spoils of the next prize were divided in imagination over and over again as the oars splashed with constant rhythm into the sea. The long mainyard with the sail furled on it was lashed fore and aft between the masts over the rowers' heads. The starlight glinted on the bright axes, pikes, and matchlocks which stood in racks in front of the little poop deck ; a brass gun mounted on a pivot in her bows, and two small cannon on her after-deck, completed her armament. It was not, therefore, in the weight of her ordnance that the galley was formidable, but in the propelling power, which enabled her to

attack or retire in a calm, when her adversary might be lying like a helpless log on the ocean.

The men of the watch on the *Dhudarra* paced the forecastle, listening to the hum of the breakers on the bar and on the long sands which bound the bay. It was now an hour from high water, when the sound of oars rose above the moan of the surf, and as it drew nearer they detected a dark object on the water to seaward. A light was shown twice, the signal was answered, and in a few minutes the galley rounded to and lay on her oars a few yards clear of the ship's side. O'Flahertie was quickly on deck.

"Any news?" sung out O'Malley.

"None," replied O'Flahertie, "and I hope no ship will come out this tide, for in the dark we may not know whether she is the right one or not."

"I think I could manage to see enough if I got near her; however, I shall drop in closer to the bar and anchor."

"That is good," said O'Flahertie, "but

after an hour's ebb leave the bay, for nothing can then come out, and you must be out of sight by daybreak."

The oars splashed once more into the sea, and the galley vanished in the darkness, sending back a cheery shout in response to the wishes for good luck from the bark.

The *Dhudarra* had now swung to the ebb, the strangely square top of Benbulben became more distinct against the pale light coming into the eastern sky, the old viking grave on Knocknarea had caught the dawn, and as light airs came off the land, the tall sails of the galley glided ghost-like through the gloom as she passed seawards, the quest having failed this once.

O'Flahertie studied the weather anxiously. The bright blaze of the sunrise augured ill, and it was no anchorage to be caught in should the weather turn out bad. He determined, however, to hold his ground; the weather had so long been fine it would take some time to break. If a break did come it would surely begin in the south, so he argued, and, trusting to the perfectly

innocent appearance of his craft, he allowed the daylight to reveal his presence to the dwellers on the coast.

Shortly after sunrise a small boat, manned by three fishermen, came off, and, O'Flahertie was careful to prevent their coming on board, lest they should notice his guns, which had been lifted from the hold, and were in position. At the same time the men were treated hospitably, and to their questions it was replied that the *Dhudarra* was a merchantman bound to Ballyshannon, and from them the fact was elicited that there were no less than three vessels in Sligo ready for sea.

The day wore on, the wind had gone to the south, and just before high water a sail was sighted coming down the estuary. All eyes were strained to see if possible the distinguishing marks, and when a glint of light revealed the new canvas in a portion of her foresail, O'Flahertie knew that the time for action had arrived. "All hands on deck!" was shouted into the forecastle by the boatswain, and quickly the crew manned

the windlass, and brought the cable slowly in. When short on the anchor, the sails were loosened, and as they filled to the breeze the anchor rose to the bows, where it was catted and lashed securely.

By this time the Sligo vessel was swaying from side to side in the swell on the bar, and then, shaping her course seawards, came sailing as if to meet the *Dhudarra*. For some time a drizzling rain had set in, and the wind falling away, both vessels began to drift seawards with the ebb, their respective distances remaining the same.

How long this might last it would be difficult to say, and O'Flahertie became nervous lest night should come on and he might lose his prize in the darkness.

O'Malley, however, had kept a good look-out, and so soon as the vessels had drifted into sight of the galley he quickly gave his orders.

The crew were instantly in their places, and the galley was soon springing from swell to swell as the men bent to the flashing oars.

On board the merchantman the situation was quickly realised. The *Dhudarra* they knew nothing about, but there could be no mistake as to the piratical craft rapidly approaching. Their four guns were quickly loaded and small arms served out to the crew. At the same time they ran up their flag to show she was an English ship.

O'Malley, quite alive to the danger of approaching a vessel fully prepared, even though she was no warship, as they neared one another took the precaution of keeping well in front of her bows, believing that any guns she might have in position would be on the poop or main deck. Here he paused, and held a short council of war with Dowdery O'Malley of Clare Island, who was his mate.

The *Dhudarra* was about a mile to the north-westward. One idea was, should they first join her and tow her into action with the bark? her heavier guns being certain to bring the latter quickly to reason. The other was to summon the bark by a single

shot to surrender, and if she did not do so, to board her with a sudden rush. Against this alternative, which would have been unquestionably adopted under ordinary circumstances, was the thought that if the sheriff was on board, which they believed he was, he would probably have an escort of at least twenty armed men, which, in addition to the crew, would have to be dealt with.

However, O'Malley's blood was up, and the idea of towing up the *Dhudarra* was quickly dismissed.

A round shot was fired from the brass gun on the bows, and as it ricocheted from swell to swell past the side of the bark, all eyes watched eagerly to note the effect.

The only reply was a loud and prolonged shout of defiance from the bark's crew. She lay now so near that the heavy flap of her sails against the spars was audible.

The brass gun was reloaded with grape; the muskets were loaded and the matches protected from the drizzling rain under the benches.

A few words of encouragement to his crew, in which he explained what each man should do, then O'Malley himself taking the helm, gave a cheery shout to the men to give way.

The galley and the bark were now stem on to each other, and the men on the galley's bows were ready, as she bounded forward, to fire when the range for the grape was reached.

At this critical moment the bark's sails bellied out with a sudden breeze, and although she had scarcely time to gather way, her head turned slowly to windward, laying her broadside open to the galley. O'Malley saw she was full of men and that the attack must needs be a desperate one. Well would it have been for him had he followed the more sober counsels of bringing his consort into action. Even now it was possible to withdraw, but who could say that it was probable that men with their teeth set for the final *mélée* could estimate what was prudent and what was not.

All was now a mere matter of seconds. The bark was the first to fire, the captain's object being to sink his assailant. The first round shot flew screaming over the heads of the rowers, but the next instant the galley was struck on the poop, the splinters flying from the deck at Teige O'Malley's feet. Half the oars were run in, the boarders seized their pikes. The first shot was now fired from the galley, and the grape told with desperate effect. The Queen's sheriff was one of the first to fall, and five or six men were killed or wounded.

As the galley's head turned round, her after guns were fired, and at the next moment she crashed alongside. The grappling irons were flung on board. The musketeers on both sides kept up a hot fire, and the pikemen, springing on the rail with the dreaded O'Malley war cry, drove the bark's crew in a helpless crowd towards the poop.

The breeze had now freshened, but instinctively as the men leaped on board they cut the sheets of the head sails with

their axes. Owing to this, and to the weight of the galley alongside, the bark could make no headway.

Then the dark shadow of the *Dhudarra's* sails loomed above the fighters as, luffing up into the wind, O'Flahertie brought his ship to off the bark's quarter. Overpowered, as he now most certainly was, the English captain hauled down his flag, and stepping forward over the gory deck, craved the lives of his crew from O'Malley.

O'Malley, ghastly pale, his saffron doublet clotted with blood, gave his word for their safety; and the crew, coming forward, laid their arms in a heap on the main hatch. They numbered fifteen weather-beaten men and three fair-haired youths, while twenty lay dead or dying about the decks. Five men of the galley's crew were killed, and O'Malley and several others were badly wounded.

CHAPTER X.

THE DEVIL'S HOOK.

THE wide sheet of water forming Achill Sound lay still, except where the reflections of the Curraun Mountains were broken by the swirling eddies, while here and there the sandbanks began to appear and form centres of attraction for white clouds of cackling gulls.

The mountain-tops were capped with heavy masses of fleecy clouds, which drifted slowly from the southward and formed a striking contrast to the dark heather-clad slopes beneath, reaching down to the margin of the Sound.

The small keep of Kildavnet Castle was a central object in the scene. It stood on the island shore amidst a cluster of

cabins, from which wreaths of blue peat smoke ascended in the still, moisture-laden air. From a galley drawn upon the shore men were busily engaged transferring stores to the tower, while another galley of rougher build lay at anchor about a hundred yards from the castle wall.

Such a fortress could offer little protection against a well-equipped foe, but it, and scores of others like it, secured the person of the petty chieftain from sudden attack or treachery. He, with his warders, controlled the community of kerne and free peasantry on the lands which he held, not by right of inheritance, but by having been elected by them. He was king so far as his own territory was concerned, but he in his turn was forced to put himself under the protection of the neighbouring powerful chieftain, to whom he as a rule paid tribute, and he was also bound under the law of Coyne and Livery to lodge and feed the chieftain's men when they travelled through his country. The system pressed heavily

on the tillers of the soil, but thus only could their homesteads and little possessions be safeguarded. It is therefore not strange that the kerne were ever ready to aid their chieftain in otherwise raising the funds necessary for his establishment, whether it was by raids on land or by piracy on the sea.

The stranger in those days was *prima facie* an enemy. The idea of a brotherhood as wide as humanity itself had not yet taken hold of men's minds, and in estimating the deeds done in these bygone times we must divest ourselves of ideas of recent growth, although we may believe that the germs of them lay in the religion which all Christians, both then and now, profess to believe.

Richard Bourke, who had come from Carrigahowla, superintended the landing of the ammunition and other stores, while Walter McTibbot was arranging the platform for a gun to guard the anchorage. In this he was assisted by another Richard Bourke, who had recently arrived.

This Richard, surnamed the Devil's Hook, by which strange appellation we shall henceforth speak of him, to distinguish him from his kinsman the MacWilliam, derived this name from a somewhat romantic, although hardly creditable, adventure connected with his second marriage. Having become enamoured of the daughter of a chieftain who had, like many others at the time, adopted the new form of religion insisted on by the English, he experienced some difficulty in getting the marriage ceremony performed, owing to the danger which any priest or friar would run in performing such an illegal act as solemnising a mixed marriage. Bourke in his difficulty visited two friars whom he was told might be induced to take the risk.

"It is a dangerous task," said one.

"We should certainly lose our heads if it were found out," said the other.

"But what am I to do?" said Bourke.
"You don't, I suppose, want me to change religion?"

"God forbid!" devoutly replied the first friar.

"Perhaps you could bait the hook," suggested the second.

"Certainly," said Bourke, grasping at the idea, "and with a purse of gold."

"Good!" said the friar; "but it must be done in the most secret place, and there must be no witnesses but the three holy angels who watch on the left and the three on the right."

"Agreed," said Bourke, seeing no objection to the proposed witnesses; "and I suggest that the old *Cashel* of Cahir-na-Mart would be the most secluded place."

On the evening appointed Bourke and his bride-elect wended their way to the old *rath* where in days gone by, some prehistoric warrior defied his enemies, and there, true to his word, they found the friar.

He was trembling with fright, but seizing the proffered purse, proceeded with the ceremony, which was quickly finished,

and the newly married couple took themselves away. Then the friar opened the little bag to fully enjoy his prize. The first piece he extracted was a rap (a counterfeit coin), and stamping his foot he spat on the piece and flung it on the ground, and exclaimed, “May the marriage be as bad as the payment!” Then another: it too was a rap! and so on, the whole bag was worthless; and fuming with rage he cried, “It is you, Bourke, are the Devil’s Hook to have put a bait on like that.”

“The Devil’s Hook!—ha, ha, ha!” laughed the other friar, and soon it got out; and whatever else came of it, the name stuck to Bourke to his dying day, and by it he is known in history.

He had now come to Kildavnet with his son from their castle near the head of Blacksod Bay to discuss with his kinsman the rebuilding of Doona Castle, which had fallen into ruin. While they were thus engaged, Grace O’Malley superintended the women of the household in packing the wool which was to form the return cargo of the galley.

As the shades of evening fell the work ceased, and soon the appetising odour of cooking pervaded the little fortress. The meal was served in the upper apartment of the keep, and here, over stoups of red wine, MacWilliam discussed with his kinsman the prospects of peace and war.

There was an ever-present dread of invasion from some of the Queen's ships, which of late had been more frequently seen on the coast, thus their booty was not so safe as formerly; also military expeditions from Athlone and Galway were pressing further and further westward. The sheriff had become a power to be dreaded, and the strengthening of their fortresses was a necessity to which every chieftain seemed alive. Doona Castle must be rebuilt and fortified, so that the Devil's Hook might place his son there, and thus maintain their power and influence in that portion of the territory.

Thus the evening passed until Richard Bourke, who must return to his galley, rose to leave.

"Grace O'Malley should come north with me," said the Devil's Hook. "She can see Doona, and rest with us in Erris."

Grace, possessed as she was of some ill-defined hope of getting nearer to Donal, seemed to approve of the suggestion. When the party broke up Richard Bourke signified to Grace that he wished to speak with her, and they left the tower together. Before he went off to the galley, which now lay afloat, the two walked along the shore of the Sound. Angry gusts came up from Clew Bay, and the boom of the surf on the iron-bound coast came over the hills from the westward.

"It is not likely the weather will permit of our leaving in the morning," said Bourke; "but if it does we must be off on the early tide."

"No," said Grace, "it is not likely; it will be a fair wind for the north, however."

To go northward seemed to be the one idea which possessed her.

"If you go north with the Devil's Hook,

we part here for a time. I think it well you should go if you are so pleased, but, Grace," and here he paused, and taking her hand in his continued, "I want to have one question answered. I know we are good friends. You know how much would depend on our union, but I do not know whether or not you care for another more than for me. If you do, we will be I hope as good friends as ever."

"Oh, why have you asked me to answer that question?" pleaded Grace, as her hand trembled in his grasp. "I am happy as I am, and do not want to break up all our plans we have made together."

Grace thus tried to evade the crisis for a time, her feelings, as though in sympathy with the elements, being no less stormy at this moment than the gale which howled through the dark hills above them. The MacWilliam dropped her hand, feeling sure that the decision was against him. At this Grace gained courage. She seemed to see the face of him she loved struggling

for life through that storm. How could she deny him ?

Her wonted courage returned, and she gasped, "Richard Bourke, you know that I love Donal O'Flahertie."

The blow had fallen, and the blue glare of the lightning as it lit up Grace's pale face, and the crash of thunder which followed, seemed as if sent to seal this fateful decision for both their lives.

"Yes; I have seen it all along, but I hoped I might have been mistaken," replied Bourke; there was silence between them for some moments, and then turning to other subjects more commonplace, they commenced to retrace their steps. When they reached the landingplace from which Bourke should embark, they found several boats just arrived, that had been driven in from the fishing grounds by the rising storm, and heaps of pollack and red-scaled bream were being piled up by the light of bog-wood torches, which flared wildly in the gale, while women carried off basketloads of the fish on their backs to their homes.

Grace lingered on the beach to see the last of Richard Bourke as his boat pushed off for the galley, and then, with many thoughts chasing one another through her mind, she retraced her steps to the tower. She saw Bourke's kinsman for a moment, and settled that she would join him in his return to Blacksod Bay.

"We must be off before daybreak," said the Devil's Hook, the light from the castle door flashing on the scabbard of his short sword, which projected beneath the cloak of wolf-skin, fastened around his shoulders by a large brass clasp. "We have a fair wind if it holds in this point, and you will see some sailing before we reach Barranagh."

Grace signified she would be ready; and soon afterwards flung herself on the couch prepared for her, with her brain too full of thoughts to think even of sleep. The castle rocked with the gusts of the storm, and strange pictures of undefined disaster crowded her imagination. What could it all mean? she asked herself. Not her interview with Richard Bourke?

She repeated the words he had spoken and her reply over and over again, but beyond all this there was some other all-pervading undefined terror with which she was forced to grapple.

She was relieved when the lights began to move outside; and as the rays glanced upward through the little slit forming the only window to her chamber, she rose and, flinging her sea cloak around her, joined the men who were returning to the galley to get ready for the start. The dark Curraun mountains almost shut out the dawn which had already commenced to strike shafts of grey light through the torn mists. The waters of the Sound were anon whirled aloft in clouds of fine spray by furious gusts, and again lay calm and still.

Achill Sound, inside its southern entrance, which is very narrow and crooked, expands opposite Kildavnet into a wide, lake-like sheet of water about four miles in length. The island then again approaches the mainland and forms a narrow strip, through

which the flood and ebb rush with the speed of a mill stream. Still further north the Sound expands into a complexity of channels, one arm, which extends far to the south-eastward, terminating in a salt lough of considerable size and of great depth. High heather-clad mountains, with here and there dense thickets of native oak and holly, rise on all sides and give a wild grandeur to the scenery.

The whole of this maze of channels and water ways join the southern end of Blacksod Bay by a narrow opening, which, on account of the violence with which the tide roars through it, is called the Bull's Mouth.

The anchor was weighed and a small storm sail hoisted in the place of the big lateen sail, which remained furled on its yard. The Devil's Hook took the helm, and with the first squall the sail filled and the craft, gathering way, glided northwards into the gloom.

The steersman, to whom every twist and turn of the Channel was familiar, watched

anxiously the descent of the rain squalls, which delayed the approach of daylight and obscured the view ahead.

"We shall have a change of wind out of these showers, and it will be well if we can gain the shelter of the Mullet before the sea begins to come in from the westward," he remarked, while Grace from the poop watched for the opening in the land which seemed to block the way ahead.

The storm increased in violence. The ebb tide was now hurrying the galley forward, and the Devil's Hook braced himself to take the narrows, as a huntsman who sees before him some break-neck fence, pulls himself together for the leap. Now a rocky point is passed, another looms out of the darkness under the lee bow, while with lightning speed, urged on by storm and current, the craft flies through the narrow strait.

Grace, standing near the weather-rail, watched the passage with delight, the excitement for the moment banishing the gloomy forebodings which so harassed her.

The wild dawn was changing to a wilder day, the rain fell in torrents, and still onward, through another wide expanse of water, the galley held her course.

The dark mountains occasionally loomed on the port hand through the clouds, while the low sandhills of Ballycroy closed in gradually to starboard.

Once more the current increased its speed, and the galley rushed northwards through the Bull's Mouth into the little inland sea of Blacksod Bay.

All idea of landing at Doona had now to be abandoned, the wind having shifted to the south-west, making Doona a lee shore, and if, as was expected, it went into the north-west, there might be great difficulty in reaching Barranagh at all. When they passed Blacksod Bay they encountered the full swell of the Atlantic, which, having worked round to some extent under the lee of Achill, rolled in between that island and the Mullet, and broke in surf on the Doona shore. At a word from the chieftain six men seized the sheet and

hauled it in, the galley heeling over to the fierce blasts which, descending from dark Slieve More, carried the spindrift aloft like cloudy pillars chasing each other across the sea. Now an inky-black rain squall shut out the little patches of blue sky which were beginning to appear. As it came on the sail gave one loud flap, and the Devil's Hook, who had relinquished the tiller since the Bull's Mouth was safely passed, shouted to put the helm up, and at the same time ordered the men to haul the sheet home. Now the galley hammered her way through the seas coming at her from more ahead, sending drenching clouds of spray from her bows. Fortunately for all on board, and especially for the rowers, they were now well up under shelter of the western land. By mid-day they were abreast of Barranagh, and Bourke, ordering the sail to be lowered and the twenty oars run out, took the helm and headed his little vessel for the land. For half an hour there was a tough struggle between the oarsmen and the

storm, but they slowly gained ground to windward, the sea became less and less rough, until at last the smooth water of the little bay was reached, on which the keep of Barranagh Castle rose close to the margin of the shore. Here the anchor was let go, and a primitive boat, a raw-hide covered curragh, coming off, Grace, with the Devil's Hook, stepped into it and were boated ashore. One of the Barretts met them on the beach, and escorted them to his castle, which, as usual, rose amidst a cluster of dark thatched cabins of the kerne. On entering the first dimly lighted hall Grace saw hanging on the walls the bright axes and pikes of his retainers, and in the centre of the apartment a table, on which the women had laid out a meal, for which the travellers were quite ready after their stormy voyage. Young Barrett had often heard of O'Malley's daughter, and now, as he eyed her lithe figure, clad in the saffron-dyed bodice, the dark tresses, damp with the sea spray, hanging loosely

round her white forehead; as he caught glances from those eyes, where light and darkness seemed strangely combined, he must have been less than the man he was if he did not envy the chieftain, who was to have this dark beauty for his bride. Little did he dream of what had passed between that chieftain and Grace O'Malley only a few short hours before. Still less could he understand the thoughts which made her restless and preoccupied, in spite of all that he could do to please. Grace was naturally interested in seeing all the portions of the coast which were new to her, but she had conceived some scarcely formed idea that Donal might, on his way south, have been driven into Black-sod Bay. No tidings had come from him or from Teige for months, but she knew they would try and get home before winter. And yet, though there were so many chances against her meeting them, she was disappointed when they did not appear.

"Have any ships sought shelter in the bay of late?" she inquired.

"No," said Barrett, "except five Spanish fishing boats, which have gone home; another of them was wrecked on Inniskea. They were all poor devils, and, except for their dried fish, had no provisions. I was up in the Scotch isles during the summer, taking back a hundred Scots from Tyrconnell."

"Did you hear or see anything of—" and here Grace hesitated, her face becoming if anything more pale—"anything of my brother's galley, and the *Dhudarra*?"

"I did not meet them, but I knew they would likely stay on the Tyrconnell coast, as O'Donnell expected trouble during the winter."

Grace's countenance fell at hearing this news, and her manner showed that she was more than ever occupied by thoughts which she did not express.

Barrett urged that they should stay where they were for the night, but it was finally arranged that they should proceed to Bourke's stronghold on Portnafranka.

CHAPTER XI.

IN ERRIS.

THE horses were ordered. The Devil's Hook mounted one with Grace behind him on the pillion, his son Edmond another, and with three attendants, also mounted, they rode off through the cabins of the kerne, and in spite of the howling blast were soon cantering across the flat, sandy pasturages of the Mullet. At another group of cabins wild-looking men, women, and children, only half clad in coarse flannel, their bare arms, legs, and faces tanned by the sea breeze, and further darkened by peat smoke, stood open-mouthed to see them pass. These folk were at present engaged in saving their little storm-tossed crop of oats, and as they resumed

work many a jest passed from one to the other about the Devil's Hook having been on a raid. "He must have sacked a castle at least, for young women like that one on the pillion are not to be picked up in the homes of the kerne." The youths felt the harvest work more laborious than before, and wished that some chance might occur when the Devil's Hook would require the aid of all his retainers. "It was grand work to be at instead of pulling and digging like beasts of burthen." A few jeers from the girls and curses from the old women recalled their minds from such exploits, and set them to work once more. It was poor harvest weather, the air laden with salt spray driven far inland by the storm; but the rain had ceased, and the sun shone out. As Grace and her party rode onwards they gained wide views from some of the low hills of the Mullet. Away to the westward, beyond a narrow strait of dark sea, the rocky islets of Innishkea and Innishglora formed a natural barrier to the ocean swell, which broke on them amidst clouds of white

foam, and the loud continuous roar of the breakers thrilled through the air. The track of the storm was marked by sprays of dry seaweed flying eastward across their path and the masses of yellow curdled foam which drifted in the wind. Occasionally the sharp biting of the blowing sand compelled them to keep their heads low, or to look only towards the white wave crests on Blacksod Bay. Away to the south Slieve More, in Achill, was still prominent, in contrast to the low sand-dunes of the foreground, its base lost in the white mists of driving spray.

As they rode northwards the roar of the surf became louder, and against the white background of foam the little ruined monastery on Innishglora, where Saint Brendan prayed, and where "Lir's lonely daughter" lies buried, was distinctly visible. The hills now rose higher, and the haven of Portnafranka broke on them with the Devil's Hook's castle at its head. Inside the port the sea was still, a galley lay aground, and three fishing boats rode to their anchors in

safety, while at the rocky entrance the breakers boiled and thundered, sending up dark columns of spray against the evening sky. The hull of a large vessel lay half submerged about the centre of the harbour, on which a crowd of men were engaged, breaking into pieces and rafting her planks to shore.

"That was our last prize," said the Devil's Hook, pointing to the ruined hulk.

"Was she the vessel bound for Galway with Government stores of which I heard ?" said Grace.

"The same, and what was more, she had plenty of cash in her chest."

"What became of the crew ?" asked Grace.

"They were unfortunate, poor devils ! I thought, when I had cleared her out, to let them go, but, as you know, it was easy enough to sail into this port with a westerly wind when we were the pilots, but my namesake himself could not sail her out. When I was done with her I told the crew to be off, and they tried to warp her through the

entrance. As the swell was too heavy, she struck a rock, and they had to cut the warp and run her back to the harbour and strike her aground to prevent her sinking. That night the kerne, who were averse to my letting her start, swarmed on board; the crew tried to turn them off, but they were killed to a man. The last of them was hanging for nearly a month from her yardarm."

"Poor wretches!" said Grace. "I would not mind killing any number of people if I was fighting against the Queen or against an armed enemy, but I could never agree to this kind of thing."

"Well, in a way we were fighting against the Queen in this case. Were we not taking her treasure, which was to support our enemies in Galway? But I am not to blame," continued Bourke, "though all the water in the ocean would not clear me of it in the eyes of the lawyers."

"Those fishing boats look like strangers," remarked Grace.

"Yes; they are French, as you may have gathered from their rig. A few of them were

fishing to the north, these are now bound for home. The Spaniards are gone home long ago. There were over four hundred of them fishing down south. These are now loaded with salt fish, but have no money. I exchanged an ox and some sheep for three pipes of their wine. They are fine sailors, but do not know the coast as well as the Spaniards. They know Desmond's country better than this. They all say it is quite certain that a great Spanish army will come to free this country from the English either next year or the year after."

"Yes," said Grace, "I believe it is so, and in the face of it I have no patience with those who refuse to stand out, and are leaning towards England and giving up their castles to the Queen."

While thus conversing their horses were making their way across the wet sand, and a few minutes later they entered the castle bawn. The courtyard was strewn with chests, chains, and sails belonging to the ill-fated prize. Edmond assisted Grace to alight, and they passed from the golden

light of the sun, as it flashed through the storm clouds before setting in the ocean, into the dim hall of the keep. The women of the household quickly took Grace O'Malley under their special care, and the elder Bourke busied himself about matters concerning the wreck stores. Then the doors were closed against the storm, and the whole party met at the evening meal.

When this important event was over, strolling gamblers were admitted, and the rattle of the dice sounded weird above the howling of the wind. Edmund Bourke played against Grace, and soon the interest of the whole party was centred upon their game. The stranger threw the dice. Grace was winning, and in the excitement of the game she seemed to have forgotten her troubled thoughts. The Devil's Hook then called time, and Edmond had to square up. Grace, looking more charming than ever, refused point blank to accept a coin, but said she, laughing, "Give me instead the first casket of dia-

monds which you take from a prize, and we will consider our account settled."

"Accepted," cried Bourke; "but you have let me off too cheap, for it will be a long day ere a casket of diamonds will be found in Erris or Tyrawly."

The flow of conversation, which had ceased while the play lasted, was now resumed, and stoups of wine and usquebaugh were served to the gamblers and to the party at large. When remarks were made about the storm, one of the vagrants said to Bourke, "Those vessels had a narrow escape to-day at Broadhaven, if they have not yet gone ashore."

"What vessels?"

"It is strange you have not heard; we were down to the northward last night, and to-day two barks, and a galley which we thought was yours, put into the bay, in the height of the storm, and were making the harbour easily, when the wind backed to the southward in a squall, and they missed the entrance. It was useless for them to attempt to tack with such a sea rolling in, so they kept away for Rossdow. Whether

the galley was lost on the bar or got in, we cannot say, but the larger craft seemed to anchor under Reenroe Point, and will most likely be a good chance for Rory oge, as they will surely be ashore before morning."

"What was the galley like?" broke in Grace, attracted by the words she overheard, and almost breathless with anxiety.

"Oh! we can't tell; there was too much spray and a heavy shower of rain just then, and we were on the wrong side of the harbour for a good view."

"It was Teige! It was Teige! and O'Flahertie!" she frantically exclaimed. "The galley is lost, and even now the *Dhudarra* may be in the terrible surf."

"It cannot be so," said Edmond Bourke. "They were only two, and this man speaks of three; and Barrett said they could not be home before winter."

"I do not know, I do not understand, but that it is O'Flahertie and Teige I am certain." And Grace, seizing the old chieftain's hand, went on, "Let me go to

them ; let me have a horse and a guide and——”

“ Impossible ! ” said Bourke. “ It is late. You need rest. We can go there in the morning. It would take us five hours to reach the place ; and then why should we go ? The galley is either lost, or safe in the harbour ; we do not know anything of the others, and if they were lost, Killgalligan will expect the spoil. He is a man not to be trifled with. He has swept off some cattle and horses from my people within the last seven days.”

“ Oh, don’t speak to me of rest or delay,” cried Grace ; and, looking round her beseechingly, “ Will no one come with me ? Will no one help me ? ”

At this appeal Edmond Bourke could no longer stand aloof. Grace, seeing her advantage, while a tear trickled down her flushed cheek, smiling on him, said, “ I have won again. You must be my guide.”

How could a man withstand such an appeal from O’Malley’s daughter ? Three horses were ordered to be got ready and six

gallowglasses fully armed to start in an hour. Edmond felt it was a wild errand. The Devil's Hook was not quite sure whether he ought not to stop them, but Grace in the mood she was now in would not be thwarted, and in an hour the tramping of the horses was heard in the courtyard, and, taking her seat behind Edmond Bourke, Grace with her escort vanished in the stormy night.

There were bogs to be crossed where every one was compelled to dismount, and the horses were with difficulty dragged across. But the real difficulties did not begin until they had passed the narrow strip of land separating Blacksod Bay to the southward, from Broadhaven on the north. The latter great inlet is beset by many sandbanks, but near its mouth affords good anchorage, and opens into the wide bay to the eastward of Erris Head. The eastern headland of this bay is Killgalligan Point. High and rocky, with islets and reefs off it, its northern face presents a wall of sea cliffs, while its southern side slopes down, heather clad, to

the sand-dunes near Rossdow or Rossport. Outside the sandy bar of this estuary the low rocky point of Reenroe stretching to the southward, offers a partial but insecure shelter to any vessels which might have the very bad fortune of being driven to leeward on this rugged coast. Where the sea cliffs rise high a ruined battlement, protecting the approach to an outlying crag, still marks the spot where, in this the very remotest portion of the Irish coast, Barrett of Killgalligan, a freebooter of the worst type, had his stronghold. Several times the Bourkes had thought of expelling him, but unless all his lawless followers could also be slain, they would continue to be robbers and a curse to the neighbourhood.

The old man had recently met with a horrible end, and as Grace walked across a long stretch of bog where it was impossible to ride, Bourke explained to her the way it came about.

" You see," said Bourke, " they had been making a raid, and had driven off some horses and kine from Doohoma. They had

got back to the hillside above where we are now, and lay down to rest at night by turns. The owners followed quickly on their track, and when old Killgalligan was lying asleep with the best horse he had stolen tethered to his arm, its rightful master, creeping up in the darkness, sprung on the horse's back and away went the animal at a gallop, dragging the old man behind. His shouts for help were quickly silenced by his brains being dashed out against a rock, and by the time they had ridden a mile his arm only was hanging to the rope. The cattle were all recovered, and so old Rory was served well ! ”

“ But,” said Grace, “ I suppose this put an end to all the robbery.”

“ Not a bit of it. He has left two sons worse than himself.”

At this moment a fresh squall came on, accompanied by such a downpour of rain that the torch of bog-wood with which their guide tried to make out the way was extinguished, and they had to cower behind some tussocks near a stream until the fury of the gale should moderate.

"We shall have the wind into the north after this," said Bourke, "and if the vessels have held out so far, they will have more shelter." He said this to try to keep up Grace's spirits and allay her fears.

But his words fell unnoticed, except by the kerne, who, sitting with their backs to the storm, talked on incessantly as if it was a fine summer day. Grace, exhausted by the previous sleepless night coupled with anxiety and fatigue, had no sooner sat down than she fell fast asleep; Bourke, noticing that she stood in much need of rest, decided not to disturb her, so, gently throwing his cloak over her, he crouched beneath the bank of the little rivulet, above which the blast sang wildly through the heather.

The grey dawn was just becoming visible above the desolate mountains on their right when Grace awoke from her slumber.

"I have been asleep," she exclaimed. "We have lost time. Oh! why did you not rouse me? Let us press on!"

"The weather is clearing up," said Bourke; "it may all be right yet." But

the boom of the surf struck on Grace's ear like the knell of doom.

Struggling on and on, now riding, now walking, at one time on the hard shore of some creek, then traversing a deep swamp, or fording a stream swelled by the frequent rains, as the day broke they crossed a mountain spur, and the surf-girt bay of Rossport opened to their view.

No vessel was in sight—the anchorage was as deserted as is its wont. Grace's disappointment was intense. Bourke, who knew the place well, detected one black spot near the distant shore amidst the white surf. He knew that there was no rock in that part of the bay, and divined its import at a glance. How could he tell her what he thought! "Time will shew," he said to himself; and now, mounting a horse each, they rode on.

CHAPTER XII.

STORM.

WHEN the Chester ship had struck her flag in Sligo Bay, O'Flahertie lowered his boat and came alongside with ten men, to assist O'Malley in making all secure. He stepped on board at a critical moment, for Teige, faint from the wound in his shoulder, had just sunk to the deck, and a sudden rush from the ship's crew must at this moment have reversed the victory. O'Flahertie, after a word of comfort to O'Malley, proceeded to secure the prisoners. With their hands tied behind their backs they were made to sit in a row on the deck, while the cabins were searched and the magazine secured.

Then Teige had to be thought of.

"I have promised those men their lives," were his first words as O'Flahertie, kneeling beside him, supported his shoulders with his arm.

"Their lives will be spared," said O'Flahertie, but Dowdary O'Malley growled under his breath, "It will be a bad job if they are; what do we want of them, and he himself nearly killed?"

While O'Flahertie cut open Teige's jerkin to examine the wound, for the bullet had penetrated deep, and was still in his side, some of the crew were told off to throw the dead and badly wounded overboard. The galley was then cleared from her entanglement and shoved off from the side, the banging of the two vessels together in the heave of the swell having already done no little damage to the galley's side.

O'Flahertie looked grave, but spoke in reassuring words to Teige.

Heavy masses of clouds drifted low over the land from the south, and rain showers were visible in various quarters.

"A fair wind for Erris," said O'Flahertie to Dhudarra O'Malley ; "and considering all things, and especially Teige's condition, I think we must shape our course that way."

"I see nothing else for it, but I think we should make these varlets walk the plank before we start. What do we want with them ? "

"Certainly not," responded O'Flahertie, emphatically, "their lives are spared ; we could land them in Erris and give them their chance. Three are English, and the rest are O'Connor's men. I will take half of them in the *Dhudarra*, and will send O'Dowde to take charge of the prize ; you will have enough to do to look after the galley."

O'Flahertie suggested to Teige that he should now be moved to the *Dhudarra*, but he would not hear of it.

"I will be all right in the galley, and we won't be long at sea."

Teige was not a man to be gainsaid ; O'Flahertie therefore lowered him carefully to the boat, and sending with him the most

skilful hand at treating wounds whom they had in their company, he saw him safely placed in his little cabin beneath the poop. The sails were now unfurled and hoisted, and while the galley slipped slowly over the glassy swell O'Flahertie quickly made his arrangements, and the other vessels followed in her track.

From Sligo Bay the coast-line trends a little to north of west for a distance of about fifty miles. Broken at first by the large bay of Killala and the smaller Lacken Bay, it then rises into a long line of immense cliffs presenting some of the finest examples of rock architecture on the Irish coast, which the lover of nature might look upon with admiration. But with what other feelings the Spaniards of the remnant of the Great Armada, a few years later, found themselves confronted by this awful barrier when struggling southwards, can be more easily imagined than described. When Benwee Head is reached the coast begins to bend westerly, and Erris Head, with Eagle Island off it, forms the actual

corner, which has to be rounded before a vessel can take a course to the southward. The great bay of Broad Haven opens between Benwee and Erris Heads, and offers an important harbour of refuge.

The wind being light, it was well on in the evening when O'Flahertie's little fleet had reached Killala Bay. Without seeking its shelter they held on their way to the westward, hoping at least to reach Broadhaven before the storm, which was evidently brewing, should break upon them. Out of Killala Bay came angry puffs accompanied by drenching showers, causing the galley at one moment to rush foaming through the water, and then to roll restlessly in the swell, which was heaving in ominously from the north-west.

O'Malley lay on the little cabin floor; his attendant had failed to staunch the bleeding, and his strength was ebbing fast. His kinsman knelt at his side trying to soothe him, and at the same time to induce him to drink a little stimulant, but his face showed an entire absence of hope,

and the crew, crouching under the weather side, spoke in bated breath as they discussed his chances of life.

About sunset a fierce squall screamed through the rigging, causing the galley to heel over suddenly to starboard. The loud flap of the sails told Dowdary that the helmsman found it was too much for her, so, rushing on deck, he quickly gave orders for shortening sail. The *Dhudarra* was now close to leeward, and O'Malley saw that they also were taking in canvas. When one sail was lowered and furled, the galley could stand up to the squalls with safety, and, O'Malley, taking a look around, once more entered the cabin. Teige had roused himself, and insisted on being brought on deck. His attendant urged quietness, but it was no use. He wanted air, and despite their efforts he sprang to his feet, his eyes flashing with feverish fire, and, there being no chance of staying him, they helped him on to the poop. He seemed for the moment satisfied. "Where is Innish Clare?" he asked.

"A long way off, I fear," replied his kinsman.

"I see it right ahead. Where is the other galley with Grania on board?"

Seeing that his mind was wandering, Dowdary answered so as to appease him. Then he spoke of the recent fight, and with the present coming back his strength failed, and he sank to the deck exhausted, two of the crew helping to keep him steady.

The darkness deepened, and the clouds of white spray flying across the galley, looked ghost-like when momentarily illumed by the light from the cabin door.

Over the land to the southward the sky was now and then ablaze with sheet-lightning, and O'Malley stood nervously by the helmsman, trying to watch the squalls through the ensuing darkness.

"O'Malley! O'Malley!" cried one of the crew who was supporting the dying man, "come quick!"

Dowdary sprang to their side and knelt on the wet deck. A great gleam of lightning at this moment lit up the sky and sea. Dowdary felt Teige's heart give one great beat—it was the last—and all was over.

While these things were happening on board the galley, O'Flahertie anxiously watched the progress of the storm, and was thinking much of Grace O'Malley. If Teige should die, how terrible would be the blow to her! How could he ever break the sad news?

Then a whirling squall would come oft the land with a downpour of rain, banishing every other thought save care for his ship.

When it was past, his thoughts would return to Grace. What was she now doing? Was she thinking ever of him? In spite of the gloomy prospect of Teige's death, he felt comfort in the thought that he was not forgotten. The lightning glared to the southward; it was the same flash which had shone on the galley's deck as Teige's spirit passed away. He heard a rumble of very distant thunder and remarked to the helmsman, "That lightning is not very far off, probably in the hills of Achill."

Little did O'Flahertie know that at that

very moment, beneath that thunder-cloud among the hills of Achill, Grace O'Malley was declaring her love for him.

It was the last flash they saw, and in the drenching shower that followed the flap of the sails told of a slight change of wind. It was now blowing more westerly. Starboard sheets were hauled in, and onwards through the dark night the vessels fought their way.

When morning dawned the great cliffs to windward stood up dim and weird through the rain-clouds, and O'Malley, taking advantage, where they afforded a temporary shelter from the storm, lowered his sail, and, with the help of the oars, worked his galley about a mile to windward. He was thus able to pass inside of that strange group of islets called the Stacks, lying off Benwee Head, while the larger vessels had to go to leeward of them.

To the westward of these islets, against which the great Atlantic seas thundered and broke in clouds of snow-white foam, the little flotilla were deprived of all shelter from the gale. Now the seas rolled up in

huge green masses, bearing on their summits crests of hissing foam, and, as the vessels descended into the dark valleys between, they lost sight of each other and of everything except sea and sky. The wind, however, blew more steadily, and this was some advantage now that their course for Erris Head was more westerly, making it necessary to haul all sheets aft. Progress was very slow, and, as beating to windward under short canvas in such a sea was impossible, O'Flahertie decided to hold on his course and take advantage of the first shift of the gale to the north-westward to wear ship and make in for Broadhaven.

Feeling no fear for his own stout little ship so long as she had sea room, O'Flahertie watched the galley with deep anxiety. Now he could see her with fluttering sail breasting the crest of some great billow in a cloud of spray, and then minutes would elapse ere he could catch sight of anything more than the top of her tapering yard.

Thus onwards they fought their way mid storm and spray, until, after a lull, during

which the rain fell in bucketsful, a patch of blue sky showed, and the wind, flying suddenly to the north-west, began to blow with increased fury. O'Flahertie, who was by this time some distance ahead, immediately wore his ship round, and, the others following his example, all three stood in for their harbour of refuge, which was about six miles distant, with the wind well on their beam.

With the sea continually heaving them to leeward, it was a stiff fight, and the strain on the gear was so great that all hands watched anxiously lest a rope should give or a sail split, which, on a lee shore, as they now were, would mean certain death.

At last Erris Head gave some shelter, and O'Flahertie saw that O'Malley was getting on better than before. When within a mile of the harbour's mouth the prize was under O'Flahertie's port quarter, and the galley close astern. In another half-hour all would be safe. Away to the southward, however, the sky was obliterated by a dense mass of indigo-coloured

clouds, against which were visible white shafts of falling rain. It advanced rapidly, obscuring the land, and as it struck the sea and whipped the dark water into a line of white foam, O'Flahertie saw at a glance what was going to happen. The wind was going to "back" in a violent squall. He had just time to put his helm down and throw the *Dhudarra* into the wind, for to attempt the entrance with the gale in this point meant destruction on the rocks to the eastward. O'Dowde attempted the same evolution, but just a moment too late. The squall came on with a hissing roar; the stinging hail smote the men's faces, as, amid sheets of spindrift, they tried at all risks to save the sails. The *Dhudarra*, taken aback, paid off to the north-westward, but O'Dowde's mizzen split with a bang, and she wore round, while O'Malley, letting go his halyards, brought his yard to the deck and ran out his oars, his crew straining every nerve and muscle to hold their own. The prize, having lost much distance in coming round, found that it was now

impossible for her to weather the islets west of Benwee Head, and thus regain the open sea. Her case was desperate ; there was no time to think, for the surf on the rocky shore to leeward and on three sides of them roared loudly.

We have already stated that in the eastern corner of the outer bay of Broadhaven is the estuary of Rossport, with a sandbar across its mouth, and outside this bar is the rocky point called Rinroe. The shelter of this point appeared at this juncture to be the one chance left for both O'Dowde and O'Malley, but the swell was rolling into that part of the bay very heavily.

O'Malley, finding that against the hurricane force of the wind the oars could do nothing, raised a corner of his sail and ran for Rinroe. The prize was already driving in the same direction. No sooner was the point reached amidst great hollow swells, and O'Malley saw the surf-lined beach within its lee, than he recognised how little shelter it offered, and instantly he

accepted the one remaining alternative, to run through the surf on the bar. It was near high water, so there was just a chance of saving their lives. Seizing the helm himself, with the help of two of his best hands he steered for where he thought the deepest water might be found.

Now the galley rose on a huge green roller, her poop tossed high into the air, while her prow buried itself, as if to dive beneath the hissing foam, and as she rushed onward, the one thought prominent in the minds of the crew was, "Will she strike?"

Then her stern fell into the hollow water, the crest of the breaker roared past, her way ceased, and she seemed as if waiting for the next huge roller to overwhelm her. O'Malley set his teeth like a vice and, with an extra turn of the ropes, lashed the tiller firmly. The next wave broke a second too soon, and with a shock which wrencheded all hands from their grips, and a deluge of green sea, the galley was flung forward, having shipped much water, but in a moment was carried safe into the smooth shelter of the

creek. Running on for about half a mile O'Malley struck her aground on the sand near the south side of the harbour.

O'Dowde was but a little way astern of O'Malley when he reached Rinroe ; for him, with his deeper draught, there was no chance but to anchor. He should take such shelter as the point offered, and not go so far in as to risk touching bottom at low tide. He had anchored here before in fine weather.

“Clear away both anchors for letting go!” he shouted above the shriek of the blast through the rigging. All but one rag of sail having already been furled.

Bringing his ship broadside to the sea he ran in for the point of land. As it came abreast of his beam “Let go the port anchor!” he cried; then, as the cable run out the helm was put hard down, the starboard anchor splashed into the sea, and while half of his crew veered cable, the remainder furled the sail.

For some time she rode fairly well, the point giving a little shelter, but the under tow was very bad. Now and then it would

cause her to run on towards her anchors, her cables falling slack in bights beneath her bottom, then, turning broadside to the gale, she would be blown and hurled back by the swell until the cables, coming taut, with a terrific jerk wrenched her to her very keel and sent the spray flying from the strands of the cables like jets of steam.

As evening closed and the tide fell, the sea began to break heavily outside the point. Their position became more and more serious. And from the way the vessel rolled and wallowed in the sea, also on account of the terrible surf breaking on the shore, the men were forced to abandon the idea which many times rose in their minds of lowering their boat and leaving the vessel to her fate. Both captors and prisoners worked for their lives, and were well-nigh worn out with trying to overhaul the slack of the heavy cables when occasion so required. It was a struggle for life, which, however, could not last for long.

While it went thus with the galley and

the prize, O'Flahertie, on account of his position to windward when the squall came on, had been able to weather out all dangers and make for the open sea.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WRECK.

WHEN O'Malley saw that the galley was secure for the night, and that the water was pumped out, he hoisted up his guns, which had been sent below at the commencement of the gale, and restored them to their accustomed places. Owing to the dangerous neighbourhood he knew he was in, it appeared wiser for him to let all men know that he was not one to be trifled with.

Soon after their arrival two curraghs came alongside, and their occupants stepped on board to talk with the crew, and ask who they were and whither bound.

"'Tis Rory of Kilgalligan will be in luck to-night," remarked one of the elder men.

"Why so?" asked a gallowglass.

"'Tis long he has been waiting for a

wreck to finish the house he is building, and his kerne will have fine drinking when she comes ashore."

"But who are ye?" asked another wild-looking man with eyes bloodshot and red.

"We are the O'Malleys," said the gallow-glass, "and your friend Rory will have to show some cause before he interferes with that vessel out yonder, whether ashore or afloat."

"By the staff of St. Patrick, there will be a fight then," said the first speaker; "for Rory oge with his brother and the women cannot be at peace till they have something better to live in than that gull's nest of theirs with the big wall in front of it."

"Arra, hush!" said an old man of the party. "Isn't it better he should know 'tis the O'Malleys are here before he makes a fool of himself?"

Then, with some whispered words to three young men, one of the boats pushed off from alongside and pulled to the northern shore.

On landing, two of them struck off along

the sand-dunes to where they terminated against the mountain-side. They then ascended the sea cliffs towards the precipitous crag, with its strong battlemented rampart, within the protection of which Rory oge held high festivity, so far as beef and usquebaugh could provide the material.

O'Malley, having overheard enough of the conversation on board the galley to understand how "the land lay," set himself to plan a guard for the beach during the coming night, for, from the rolling and plunging of O'Dowde's craft, which he could see from the galley's rigging, he feared much that the end could not be long delayed. He accordingly gave orders for the vessel to be closely watched so long as enough light remained in the western sky, and for twelve gallowglasses with their swords and axes, and three musketeers, to be ready to land at a moment's notice. He also had some small coils of rope prepared which might prove useful. Then, with a view of being fresh when wanted, he threw himself on a bench in his cabin, and, worn out

with the hours of toil and anxiety, fell asleep.

The heavy banks of cloud with torn watery edges, as they travelled rapidly across the sky, glowed for awhile with wild bronze sunset tints, and then night came on.

Teige's body, sewn up in sail cloth, prepared for burial on the morrow, was removed to the midship part of the galley, and was watched sorrowfully by two of his tried followers, a small lantern being kept constantly burning.

While O'Malley lay asleep in the little cabin, the ebbing tide had left the galley almost high and dry, and the dismal sound of the surf assumed a higher key with the falling of the tide.

At about 10 p.m. the men on watch heard the sharp report of a gun from seaward. They waited for a few seconds lest that they might have been mistaken, but while peering into the blackness above the white breakers, a bright flash, followed by another report, removed all doubt, and as it came from the direction in which O'Dowde's

ship was known to be they immediately aroused O'Malley from his slumbers.

"Something has gone wrong on board the prize," he said. "We must get to the beach, for most likely he is coming ashore."

The armed party were already waiting for orders, and the small boat being brought alongside, O'Malley and the first contingent landed, and then the boat returned for the remainder. O'Malley ordered those on the galley to keep a sharp look out for his return, and two men stayed in charge of the small boat.

"Be sure you keep her afloat, and land for no order but my whistle;" and turning to his men, they started off westward, the sand and fragments of the wiry sedge from the dunes, blown before the gale, stinging their faces.

Up and down over the sandhills they made their way, then the long sweep of the outer beach lay before them. On it a fire blazed, and beneath its glare men moved to and fro. Women were there too, and O'Malley saw that it was Rory's whole party waiting for the spoil.

As yet he and his men were unnoticed, and availing himself of the shadows of the sand-dunes, he drew as near as possible. Now he could hear the voices, and gain some idea of their numbers. There were at least fifty of them, while his party only numbered a dozen. He decided to remain in ambush and make no move until it seemed to be absolutely necessary.

After they had waited for a few minutes, under the cold spray driving up before the blast, a bright flare lit up the sea and vanished again as quickly as it came.

"He is in trouble," said O'Malley to one of the gallowglasses; "but making a brave fight for it."

"Yes," said the veteran; "but if his cables were gone, he ought to have been ashore ere this."

"True for you, we will know more of it ere long," responded another.

The sparks were now flying wildly from the burning turf on the beach, and the ruddy glare lit up the line of breakers like a wall of rolling fire.

Suddenly a wild cry rang above the boom of the surf, and at the next instant a huge black mass, separating itself from the outer darkness, sprang forward into the fire-lit foam. The spray shot upwards in a bright cloud, and against it the spars, rigging, and one flapping sail of the ill-fated ship became distinctly visible.

Wild excitement now prevailed on the beach. Rory's people danced and gesticulated like demons.

Then the black hull rose on a pile of breakers, and, descending, struck the beach with a thud, while the sea poured over her like a cataract. The masts staggered for a moment, and then fell crashing into the seething foam; while the incoming waves, rushing onward, carried the wreckage towards the shore.

O'Malley sprang forward with five of his stoutest men, and directing the others to follow in extended line from the sandhills, so as to make his party seem as strong as possible, he went straight for where he saw Rory oge surrounded by his people, and

running directly up to him, so that his voice might be audible above the unceasing thunder of the surf, he ordered him to stand back.

Rory hesitated, and his men came running forward to his assistance. Quick as light a musketeer had his piece to Rory's head.

"Stand back, I say, or you are dead men!" roared O'Malley, and raising his left hand his remaining men came from out the darkness. There was no seeing how many they might be.

Rory and his kerne fell back in spite of the women who urged them forward, and who, advancing in their front, threatened many things, their hair blowing wildly about their faces in the wind.

While these things were going on, and the musketeers, in the full light of the fire, held their pieces in readiness, four of the seamen, entering the surf, seized on a tangled heap of rigging, and held to it with might and main, so that it should not be sucked back by the return wash.

On a spar just beyond their reach a man's form was visible; he raised an arm as if

imploring aid, and next instant was enveloped in a rushing wave which flung the wreckage far up on the beach. With a swishing sound the back-wash would have dragged it again from their grasp, but O'Malley's men grasping ropes held by those on shore, ran far out into the foam and snatched three men from destruction, though they were half drowned and well-nigh senseless.

Now the vessel's hull for the last time was raised aloft on the rollers, and as she struck the sand there was a shivering crash. She split in twain, one-half was dashed to pieces, while the other half floated ashore almost intact ; and as the next wave rolled in, bales of cargo, planks, and all kinds of wreckage strewed the beach.

Rory's crowd was growing stronger ; and, beyond saving the lives of his comrades, O'Malley could scarcely hope to wrest anything from his grasp. He held on, however, saved one man more, and then two dead bodies were flung in on the strand. Evidently it was all over with

the rest. Victors and vanquished had found a common grave.

A pipe of wine rolled to and fro in the surf, a tempting object to the wreckers. Now two women seized it and were rolling it up the beach, when O'Malley, stepping forward, split it with his axe, and while they shrieked for vengeance, O'Malley took advantage of the confusion to retire. The half-drowned men, of whom O'Dowde had the good or evil fortune to be one, were helped on in advance, while the musketeers brought up the rear.

A hail came from the boatmen in answer to O'Malley's whistle, and while the first half of the party were ferried across to the galley, O'Dowde was able to tell O'Malley how the catastrophe had come about. His port cable had parted. Then he fired two guns, thinking that the other cable would go almost immediately. It held on, however, longer than he expected. When at last it gave way, he loosed a corner of his foresail and ran his ship for the beach where he saw the fire, thinking that it had been lit

by his friends, and not by those who would have been his murderers were it not for O'Malley's timely appearance on the scene.

CHAPTER XIV.

SUNSHINE AFTER STORM.

NEXT morning when the sun rose o'er the dreary swells of moorland and flooded the yellow sands of Rossport Creek with golden light, its rays fell upon a line of men who, marching in solemn order across the flat beach, were bearing the body of Teige O'Malley to its resting-place.

Under other circumstances he should have been laid to rest beside his ancestors in Innish Clare, but, owing to the stormy weather which prevailed, the termination of the voyage was uncertain, they, therefore, decided to lay him in the little burial-place, near a ruined oratory, now watched over by two friars, and here his grave was prepared.

They had traversed the beach, and the

friars were advancing to meet the little funeral, when O'Malley caught sight of a mounted party coming along the hill-side, the sunlight flashing on their steel caps.

"It must be the Devil's Hook or his son," said O'Malley.

"Yes," said a gallowglass; "he has got a woman with him."

They vanished for an instant below a swell of the ground. Next moment saw them approaching at a canter.

"By the saints it is Grace!" exclaimed O'Malley. "How did she get here?"

When they rode up, and Grace recognised her kinsmen and the well-known crew of the galley, and Teige not there, she felt a dreadful shudder as the truth flashed upon her. Springing to the ground, while mountain, sea, and sky grew misty in her eyes, she exclaimed—

"Oh, where is Teige?"

O'Malley, who would have given worlds to gain time, replied—

"You seem to know, Grace, that we have been in trouble."

It was enough. She took in all the rest in one agonizing glance.

"I knew it, I knew it, some spirit told me that there was trouble," she said, laying both hands on her kinsman's arm, as her colour came and went. "Can't I see him?"

"No," said O'Malley kindly, but firmly; "we are going to lay him in his grave."

O'Malley was a rough, hard-hearted man, who thought as little of taking human life as a modern sportsman does of killing grouse, but Grace's appeal had struck a soft spot in his rugged breast, and for his own sake, if not for hers, he saw it was necessary to bring the scene speedily to a close. After a few words to Bourke he gave the order to proceed. It was Grace's first sorrow; but, shrinking from adding another to it, she dreaded to ask for O'Flahertie. Bourke relieved her mind by inquiring about the wreck.

"We had taken a prize, though she cost us dear, and after all she was smashed to pieces last night on the beach yonder."

"We feared it was O'Flahertie's ship," said Bourke. "Where is he, then?"

"God knows, I don't," was O'Malley's reply. "When the squall struck us we had enough to do to look out for ourselves. When last we saw the *Dhudarra* she was making out for the open sea, and I think they got clear."

These words brought a ray of hope; and Grace, with bowed head, followed, while the friars chanted the prayers for the dead. She bore up well till the grave was closed, and then, sinking on the sods, she buried her face in her hands and gave way to a tumult of grief. Bourke and O'Malley drew aside.

"These women are terrible in a thing of this sort," said O'Malley.

And then he ordered some of his men to return to the galley and fetch a pipe of wine as a gift to the friars.

Grace meanwhile gave way to the full luxury of sorrow. Her black hair had fallen loose, and showed her pale forehead on which the scar from the eagle's beak was still to be seen; tears forced themselves through her fingers and fell on the grave. All the scenes in which she and Teige had

been associated passed before her mind, and rendered her oblivious of outward things.

"Oh! why could not the blow have fallen on me?" she murmured to herself, as the great "Why?" with which humanity has, through all the ages, appealed to the Infinite, was for the first time forced upon her imagination, and involuntarily the plaintive keen of her people came to her lips, "Oh, Teige! why did you die? why did you die?"

Then she felt a firm hand laid on her shoulder, but she took no notice, shrinking as she did from breaking off for ever with the vivid scenes which filled her thoughts, and she trembled to think of the new sorrow which at every moment she might be asked to bear. She would rather die where she was than face it. Then consciousness seemed to return, her hands fell from her face as she looked up.

"Donal!" she cried, and flinging her arms around his neck, she buried her face with sobs of joy on his breast. It was O'Flahertie, safe and sound. With mingled sorrow and joy she listened to him while he

gradually explained how he had beaten his ship off to the open sea in all that terrible storm. How in the evening he had taken advantage of another shift of wind to stand in again, and just before dark came safely to anchor in Broadhaven.

"Little we thought," said Grace, "when we were struggling on here all through the night that you were so near; and then when we saw the wreck it was terrible! I saw it, but I feared to speak of it."

"But, Donal, we have met and—and—" She hesitated; and Donal finished the sentence, "We must not part again—is not that it?" She sobbed assent; and there, on poor Teige's grave, in the midst of one of the wildest scenes on that storm-swept coast, with the boom of the surf thrilling the air, their vows were plighted.

As soon as they again became conscious of the outer world, Grace braced herself for the final parting, and dashing aside her tears, moved away from the grave to join the rest of the party.

Edmund Bourke, who was not a little

puzzled at the scene of which he was an involuntary spectator, said to himself, "It is clear that if MacWilliam wants to marry this lady, he must needs settle his account with O'Flahertie."

Donal, too, had some qualms of conscience. At one moment he felt as though he were wronging Grace, by interfering with a union which would be to her advantage. Again he was enraptured at the very thought that she should be his for ever.

Now that Teige was gone, the castle at Kilmeena should, at her father's death, pass into Bourke's hands, and the home she loved would be hers no more. The close union of the O'Malleys and the powerful clan of the Bourkes would evidently be a great strengthening of the power of Connaught.

No doubt the O'Malleys and the O'Flaherties would be a powerful combination, but they were united already, so also were the Bourkes and O'Flaherties; for was not Finola O'Flahertie Richard Bourke's mother? Thus Donald argued the case to himself; he longed to discuss it with

Grace, but on their way back to the galley he got no chance of displaying his magnanimity.

The storms had died away into a gentle breeze from the north-east, and the sun shone gaily, bringing out all the varied tints of the heather on the mountain-side, and casting a golden glow over the sand-dunes, beyond which the blue sea sparkled and finally broke into a belt of white breakers on the bar.

"The sea will go down quickly with this weather," remarked Bourke.

"Yes," said O'Malley "we ought to get out of this place on the morning's tide," as he glanced at the sky and sea.

"What are your plans?" asked Bourke.

"Well," said O'Malley, "that depends on O'Flahertie."

"If there is a likelihood of getting out to-morrow, I will stay with you," said O'Flahertie, "and we can join the *Dhudarra* in the Haven. The chance seems to be good enough."

Grace's heart throbbed with joy when

she heard the matter thus settled. The question what she herself should do she had already settled. With her kinsman in the galley was now her natural home.

"Bourke must stay till his horses are rested and his men fed," said O'Malley, looking towards him.

"Yes, the kerne living on our land near the friars have taken them in charge. And then must I go back alone?" he added, with a glance at Grace.

"Yes," she said, as she smiled her thanks through her tears. "Never can I forget your kindness in bringing me here; I am sorry you must go back alone." Bourke at that moment felt that, even in spite of O'Flahertie and MacWilliam, he was ready to go through fire and water at her bidding, but he could only find words to say, "Oh! you may forget me, but I cannot forget my debt to you. I will pay it some time in some way."

"Before we part," said O'Malley, "I think we ought to tumble that rookery of Rory's yonder over the cliffs, and see if he

has got anything worth taking in lieu of the wreck we gave him so easily."

But Bourke had reasons of his own for preventing this, and so Rory was permitted to hang on in his evil ways.

The sun had set and the tide was low. O'Malley was busy with his men laying out an anchor so that they might haul the galley off the bank as early as possible, and while waiting, Grace and Donal sauntered along the beach under the twinkling stars; the surf sounding as a gentle murmur on the breeze which was barely strong enough to bring the odour of peat smoke from the cabins on the far mountain-side. Donal had told Grace of his difficulties and of the sacrifice she was making for him.

Her only reply as she clung closer to him was, "Do not speak to me of loss when I am to be with you. For where you are I will be, in sunshine or storm, in peace or in war, and wherever you are will be my home."

Then they spoke of plans for the future.

"The Isles of Aran," said Grace, "are

ours by right. I will claim them as my special dowry."

"Yes," said Donal, "the O'Briens have been in them too long."

"And I, as Grania of the Isles," said Grace, "can give you the right to them. We shall drive the O'Briens back to Thomond, and, with Aran in our hands, make Galway too hot for the English."

It was just an echo of one of O'Flahertie's treasured schemes. Thus with the discourse of mutual plans the night wore on until the rising of the tide bade them return to the galley.

With dawn came high water, and all on board the galley were astir. With a "heave all together" the warp to the anchor came slowly taut, the galley's keel grated on the bottom, and then she glided off into mid-channel. The great yards were swung aloft and the sails shaken out. There was little or no wind, "Man the oars!" O'Malley shouted, and with a rattle twenty oars shot forth from their rowlocks. The anchor was hove in, and with the word, "Give way,"

the long sweeps splashed simultaneously into the still water, and the galley shot ahead for the harbour's mouth. A green, glassy roller, as it sparkled into spray, tossed the galley's bow on high. She leaped the billow with a bound, then a larger one came rolling in which she also took with safety, and the bar was passed.

They looked sadly at the black hull of the prize, over which the waves were now washing harmlessly, and all on board felt not a little sore that Rory should thus have crossed their path and gone unmolested.

"Give him a parting shot," said Grace.

"Well spoken," said O'Malley; and looking forward to the gunners on the fore-deck, "Now, men, I give you two shots, let us see what you can do."

Quick as thought the ammunition was handed up and the forecastle piece loaded. O'Malley ported the helm so as to bring Rory's stronghold into range, but the galley rolled deeply in the ground swell, and the big yards swung heavily from side to side.

Under such circumstances there seemed but little chance for good shooting. A Scot gallowglass trained the piece, and as the vessel rose from a heavy roll to starboard, he applied the match ; a ringing bang echoed from the cliffs, and the rowers, pausing to watch the effect, saw splintered rocks fly from the crags midway between the little fortress and the sea.

“ Well fired, Clandonnell ! Let Murrisk have a chance,” burst from the crew.

And as a Murrisk gunner aimed the piece there was a hush of expectation. By this time a stampede was taking place in the little fortress, unprotected as it was from an attack on the sea side. Men, women, and children fled across the drawbridge and scattered on the mountain-side. Watching his opportunity the Murrisk gunner gave fire to his piece. The shot sped true to the mark, and a corner was sent flying from the building amidst a cloud of dust.

“ Well hit,” said O’Malley ; “ now, men, give way, he has had enough this time.”

And away went the galley skimming the

long swell which rolled lazily in from the ocean. Donal and Grace sat near the taff-rail. All nature seemed to them happy : the song of the rowers as the sunshine flashed from the long, wet sweeps ; the cry of the gulls that sailed around the bow. The tinge of sadness, which clouded the recent past, was but the dark background which intensified the brightness of the present.

The light airs off the land having freshened into a gentle breeze, the sails bellied out, the oars were run in, and the galley glided onward, the water making rippling laughter under her lee.

O'Flahertie had bade his men the evening before to return with orders to his mate ; and now, as they opened Broadhaven, the *Dhudarra* was seen dropping down with the ebb tide. In the harbour the water was glassy calm, and the rowers were again called to their work.

Soon they were alongside the bark ; and here Grace and Donal must part. She longed to go on board and see the spoils of the

prizes which the galley had taken and which had been transferred to the larger vessel, but a fair wind was not to be lost. The breeze had now filled all the sails, and away the two vessels went in close company for Erris Head. This wild headland with its islets were passed safely. Then for some time the rocky range of the Inniskea islands, looking dark above the long swell which broke on their shores, was abreast of them while they sailed southwards. The frowning headland of Achill now loomed up off their port bow, its dark cliffs rising two thousand feet above the surge at their base. In their middle height the dark crags were diversified by strips of grass of vivid green, while aloft on the mountain's crown the heather and yellow bog grasses had caught the golden glow of the setting sun. The dark sea rolled beneath with uneasy swell, and as the wind had dropped, the sails of the vessels flapped heavily against the spars. Then night came on, and the stars shone out, and Grace, peering down into the dark depths, saw many a creature drift by

like a globe of living light ; again as the night wind, charged with the scent of the heather, came in puffs from Slieve More, the sails swelled out, and shoals of fish flashed like sheets of molten fire as they darted from the bows. She looked up at the huge cliffs towering into the sky, appearing spectral in the starlight, and that strange love of the sea stole over her more powerfully than ever.

Never before had it felt so overwhelming. One part of her nature was absorbed by it. To be Queen of the Sea was a passion which grew with her life, which moulded her whole history and only died with her death.

Gradually her thoughts came back to the present as her eyes fell on the lights of the *Dhudarra*, her sails showing dark against the dim light of the western horizon. The life which was opening before her with O'Flahertie seemed teeming with promise, and oh ! how she longed that she might now be at his side !

With the change of watch her dreams

were disturbed, and O'Malley, rubbing his eyes to clear his vision, came on deck and ordered her below for some sleep.

"It will be long ere we pass the head," he said, "with these light airs and the tide running strong to the northward."

He was right, and she obeyed.

CHAPTER XV.

A SKIRMISH.

THE night breeze was fitful, and the dawn was breaking when the increased motion of the ship roused Grace from her light slumber and told her that they were only now in the tumble of the waters off the head. When she came on deck the sun was rising over Clew Bay. On the left the wild crags of Achill were still close at hand, and before them was Innish Clare, the home of her childhood, towering up in purple mistiness against the morning light.

Much excitement prevailed on deck, and groups of men, shielding the sunlight with their hands from their eyes, gazed intently to the southward.

Grace's eyes fell on the *Dhudarra* gliding along lazily on the heavy swell, and then beyond she caught sight of a ship with tall masts and a great spread of sail standing northward, close-hauled.

"She's no merchant vessel!" exclaimed Grace.

"No," said O'Malley, as he stood at the helm, his red head bare, shielding his eyes with his cap. "She must be the Queen's ship *Antelope*. Anyway, we are well to windward, and he cannot come up with us in this little breeze."

"Yes, but O'Flahertie?" said Grace, pale with excitement.

"He too is well to windward, but he may have to fight before the day is over. Do not fear for him, we will not desert him, and if it falls calm we shall have it all our own way."

The *Dhudarra* and the galley were now close-hauled on the port tack, the stranger on the starboard tack, and sailing as they were they were bound to approach nearer until their respective courses would inter-

sect; any other move, however, would involve loss of the weather gauge, and, under the circumstances, have been madness. One thing in O'Flahertie's favour was that he was getting the breeze fresher off the cliffs of Achill, while the war-ship was coming on with lighter airs.

As Grace stood near the taffrail with lips apart and cheeks flushed with excitement, she watched eagerly every breeze and every flutter in O'Flahertie's sails. As the head of his vessel paid off towards the enemy her heart sank, and new courage returned as he came closer to the wind. A cable's length more and his danger point would, for the time at least, be past.

The *Antelope*, for such indeed she was, luffed a little, then kept away. A great white flag, bearing the red cross of St. George, floated from her foremast head, and as its folds shook out in the morning breeze, a bright light flashed from one of her forward ports, followed by a cloud of white smoke, and while the shot skipped from wave to wave the dull report fell on the ears of the galley's crew.

"That's heavy metal," said O'Malley.
"It won't do for O'Flahertie to get hit."

"I suppose they expect that Donal will heave to," laughed Grace; "if he does, it will then be a case of close quarters."

"Anyway, they will have something to say to us ere they board him, even if they do knock his spars away. That shot fell short a long way," said O'Malley, "but they will have a better chance. Look there!"

The *Antelope* fired again, and Grace glowed with pride as she saw O'Flahertie send aloft the silk banner of the O'Malleys and fire back in defiance.

The danger-point was for O'Flahertie passed, and O'Malley, as a precautionary measure, ordered out a few oars to help the galley to windward, so that when the *Antelope* addressed herself to them they might be well out of shot.

On came the warship, the sun flashing from the gilded figure-head and from the bright brasswork on her poop.

She was, however, far to leeward of the galley, but, as expected, she fired her summons to heave to, drawing no response save a wild laugh of irony and shout of defiance from the galley's crew.

The warship held on her course, presenting, as she passed, a good view of her broadside, and O'Malley's men ventured on various conjectures as to what she would do next.

"She is done with us for this time," said one.

"Not a bit of it. I'll lay any wager you like that she will soon tack," threw in one of the veterans.

"She's keeping away for the head."

"No, there she luffs."

While her movements were thus keenly observed, O'Flahertie had held on his course with a nice breeze, and with the aid of six oars the galley kept her place abreast, but to windward of the *Dhudarra*.

"There she comes!" burst simultaneously from a dozen voices. The question was now settled, for the *Antelope*, with

fluttering canvas, had run up into the wind. Her sprit-sail came aback, and as she paid off, and her long yards swung round on the port tack, it was apparent that she meant to try conclusions with them.

But a stern chase is proverbially a long one. The wind, too, was light, and for two long hours, during which the pent-up excitement on board the galley was intense, no apparent change took place in the respective positions of the ships.

O'Flahertie was hugging the wind all he could; still the *Antelope*, owing to her topsail bowlines, which had only recently come into use, was keeping her sails better filled, and consequently was going faster, and she aimed evidently, not at making the best tack possible, but at coming into range, though to leeward, as quickly as she could.

Now they had fetched to abreast of Clare Island, and the great cliffs towered above them, and as Grace gazed up the fifteen hundred feet of crags, thoughts of her childish days filled her mind; when she

and the fair-haired Eileen wandered along their summits, and looked down on the lovely blue ocean beneath them. The cliff, too, where the eagles built, was almost visible. How many wonderful things had happened since then ! She longed to meet Eileen and tell her how she and Donal would soon be one. Perchance Eileen might, even now, be wandering along the cliff summit and looking down upon them, as they sped their way over the heaving sea.

Then the present came back in its full significance ; the *Antelope* was evidently gaining ground, and O'Malley looked anxious.

" We shall know more of our friend yonder before the day is out," he said, as he bit his lip.

" There, see !" cried Grace. " Donal has gone about, we can meet him on the next tack, and—oh ! can you not put me on board as we pass ? "

" Not to be thought of, every moment is precious now to O'Flahertie, and you are much safer where you are."

"Oh, I know it, I know it! but I want to be with him."

"We must tack too." And O'Malley cut short the argument by giving his orders for the evolution to be performed.

Round came the galley, and at the same instant round came the English warship.

"The end is not far off now, one way or other!" almost hissed O'Malley, while Grace kept her flashing eyes fixed on the enemy.

"They must be in range now. Oh! why does not Donal try a shot?" she cried, almost weeping. "Get up the ammunition, have the guns loaded, and let us close with him."

"Yes," said O'Malley, drily, "and get sunk for our pains. All the same, it is time we were loaded."

At a gesture from him, for which the gunners were eagerly watching, they hastened to their stations, and with brawny arms, laid bare for work, they rammed the shot home and saw that the matches were

all ready. The hand guns were looked to, and then they settled down in quiet expectancy.

"The wind is falling very light," remarked Grace, holding her flushed cheek to test the dying breeze.

"Ahead there the sea is glassy calm," said O'Malley, anxiously.

At this moment a bright flash came from the bows of the *Antelope*, and the shot, throwing up two tiny waterspouts, as it skipped from swell to swell, fell harmlessly into the sea, close astern of O'Flahertie.

"Too far yet," cried the gunners exultantly from the galley's forecastle.

Now the sails of the *Dhudarra* gave a lazy flap. She rolled heavily in the swell. The wind was gone!

The *Antelope*, still holding the breeze, was running on and lessening the distance, when her sails also fell slack and she only glided a short distance further; but ere her way finally stopped, her commander altered her course slightly to port so as to bring her whole broadside to bear on the

chase. Her first shot went wide, the next seemed to pass over the *Dhudarra* and splashed heavily into the water between her and the galley.

"That was for his spars! Well missed!" the men shouted.

"All oars out," was O'Malley's next order, as his crew, who, standing on the benches, were watching eagerly every turn of events, stepped to their places, and the long sweeps splashed in the sea.

"Now, Grace, is our time to interfere; had you not better go below? Though the range is long we must get within it and take our chance."

Not heeding the suggestion, Grace seized the tiller.

"Give way, men, for God's sake," she cried, anticipating O'Malley's order; heading the galley as she spoke for the *Dhudarra*, and trembling lest some fitful puff of air might give the enemy a sudden advantage before their work was done.

By this time both ships were enveloped in a cloud of smoke, which, hanging in the

still air, almost shut out the view of their hulls, their masts and upper sails alone rising clear against the sky.

The fire was not continuous, because both combatants felt that at a range of six hundred yards they could not hope for much result. Nevertheless, the shots fell freely around the *Dhudarra*.

Proud of their mistress, who was now steering them into action, and one with her in sympathy for O'Flahertie, who was their hero now that Teige was gone, the crew bent their backs to the sweeps and pulled with a vigour which sent the galley rushing through the crystal sea.

“My God, he's hit!” cried Grace from her point of vantage on the poop, as with one hand she grasped the tiller, and with the other swept her dark locks from her eyes.

A shot had struck the *Dhudarra* rather high amidships and sent the broken pieces of her bulwark flying up from out of the smoke cloud, and passing on splashed in the sea ten yards from the galley. The

rowers knew better than to pause under such circumstances, although they fully realised that at any moment a shot might strike in their midst. On rushed the galley into the smoke, the thunder of the guns drowning all other sound. Then the rowers saw Grace shift the helm hard over to port. "Cease rowing!" she cried, as she held up her bare arm, her voice being inaudible.

She had rounded to under the *Dhudarra's* quarter, and as the galley glided onward past the ship's side, Grace caught a glimpse of O'Flahertie through the smoke; he waved his hand to her, thus setting her heart at rest that as yet he at least was safe. Next instant the coils of a rope which was hove fell on the galley's poop; the gunners seized it, made it fast, and at a wave of Grace's hand the oars dipped once more into the sea. The gunners went down, and even O'Malley himself united to treble bank the oars. Grace alone remained to steer. The tow rope came taut. There was some heavy tugging at the oars until the ship gradually gathered way, then they glided

out of the smoke-cloud, a few parting shots were fired, and the captain of the *Antelope* was left with no other consolation than denouncing "that blasted galley"; and Grace's favourite benediction, which tradition has thought well to preserve, went back to him, "May you be worse this day twelve-month."

When safe out of range of the enemy's guns the rowers paused for a spell, then, resuming work in a more leisurely fashion, they made the best use of the calm by towing their consort to such a distance as would ensure a great advantage should the breeze again spring up.

Then the tow-rope was cast off, and the galley coming close to the *Dhudarra*, Grace joined O'Flahertie on board his ship, while he set about clearing the deck of the *débris* where the shot had taken effect. A spare spar had to be lashed to his foremast as a splint, for it too was badly hit, and might possibly give way should the breeze freshen. These matters took time, but, fortunately, except for a few slight splinter wounds, not

a man had been hit. And they all worked with a will, for their attachment to O'Flahertie was unbounded, and they felt proud of Grace's presence on board. For her they would work and for her they would die, and should she think well to lead they would follow, spite of all odds, against the *Antelope*, or any enemy, however strong, by sea or by land !

"A breeze ! a breeze !" came from one of the men aloft who was looking out seaward. Soon a dark line appeared on the sea to the westward. The lazy mists, which hung low and dimmed the hills of Achill, vanished, and in a few minutes the sails filled out and away both vessels went for the entrance of Clew Bay. In a very short time the sea breeze freshened, and, as the galley and the *Dhudarra* went on their way, the sails of the *Antelope* were also filled, and, like a swan enraged, which, with outspread wings, rushes to the attack, so on she came, rolling back the white foam from her bows.

In vain she crowded on studding sails

and all the canvas she could spread; in vain her bow chasers were double-shotted. She was no doubt gaining upon O'Flahertie inch by inch; but ere long new difficulties arose. The sea ahead was beset with shoals, sandbanks, and islets, of which no accurate chart existed. Still on and on she held her way, the leadsmen heaving the leads in her chains, till, at last, as the sun was getting low, the galley and the *Dhudarra* vanished behind the islands. In they went through the intricate channels of the *Inse Modha*, where they might laugh at all pursuers; and the Queen's ship, baffled a second time, hauled her wind, and in the light evening airs beat back again to the open sea.

Her captain had to content himself with entering in his log, that at “6 a.m. fell in with a piratical galley accompanied by a heavily armed bark. After a chase of three hours succeeded in bringing the latter into action at long range, but the wind falling dead, the galley towed her away; and unless their Lordships see their way to send to the

coast a flotilla of armed pinnaces that may follow these pirates into their dens, there is no chance of bringing these rascals to the gibbet."

Little he knew that he was this day baulked by a woman's hand. Still less, had he known it, could he have believed that this tall maiden with the bright eyes and raven locks was to become a terror on this coast for many a long day to come, and wherever a blow could be struck against the power of England, from Cape Clear in the "Spanish Sea" to the "out-isles" of Scotland.

Thus the advice which Captain Denham had given, to cripple the sea power of the O'Malleys, was acted on in only a half-hearted manner. Half measures failed as they usually do. Denham had risked his life for nothing, and the galleys maintained their sway.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MARRIAGE.

THE news of Teige's death fell heavily on Owen O'Malley, and although it was broken to him gently the old man never rallied from the shock. Teige, though a younger son, was his tanist. The clan had chosen him for their future chief. Now a new election must be held, and all the plans that for years Owen had been making, in order that Teige might be rich and able to maintain the honour of the family, were cast to the winds, and the flocks and herds should go to another.

Three candidates were spoken of. Of them his elder son, Owen of Cahir-na-Mart, seemed the least popular. There was then Myler oge of Carrowmore, and

Dhudarra Roe of Innish Clare ; and for months the prospect of the elections kept up an amount of ill-feeling and scheming between the different members of the clans which was an unfortunate adjunct to this system of inheritance.

Richard Bourke, who was now the Mac-William Eighter, came less often to the Owles, but was engaged inland strengthening his castle at Ballintubber, helping the O'Ruarc's, with whom his brother, the Blind abbot of Ballincarne was also united in checking the action of the O'Connors, who it was generally believed had leanings towards the English.

One day Grace was with her father, who was now rapidly failing in strength, and she felt that she must confess to him that she had refused the MacWilliam and accepted Donal O'Flahertie for her partner through life. Owen was praising O'Flahertie, who had recently become chief of his name, and Grace took courage to speak.

" Father," she said, " the castle must, I fear, cease to be ours now that Teige is gone."

"Oh, no," he replied; "it will be yours by being Richard Bourke's."

"I fear that can never be, father. I have promised my hand to another."

The old man trembled as he looked up to see what his child could mean; but she gave him no time for consideration.

"Donal O'Flahertie and I are to be one so soon as the Abbot of Murrisk can unite us."

"O'Flahertie!" said the old man, feigning even greater surprise than he felt. "Well, well, I often thought it might be so, for I was young once myself, and I have not shut my eyes in my old age. You are worthy of Donal and Donal is worthy of you, and all that is free to give I will give you; but where shall I go if you leave me?"

"To Bunown with us, or to Owen to Cahir-na-Mart," said Grace.

"Or Innish Clare," said the old man, "where I shall be near my grave."

"Enough of that," said Grace. "I want nothing but the galleys—I know the crews

will follow me—and one thing more, give me as my marriage portion your right to the Isles of Aran."

"That would be a poor dowry," said the old man. "The O'Briens are long settled there, and except for the title of Lord of the Isles of Aran, I have never got a heifer or a cask of usquebaugh from the islands."

"No matter for that," said Grace; "things may alter. The O'Briens are not beloved by the O'Flaherties, and we may make a great change there."

"Be it so—be it so," said Owen. "I wished you had asked for something better, but have your wish. There is no use in the galleys going to another, for the crews are yours, which well, I think, you know."

"Donal O'Flahertie," went on the old man, speaking to himself. "Well, it is Donal after all," and a smile passed over his face.

One bright morning in the following spring two galleys might have been seen speeding their way across Clew Bay, a

light breeze from Croagh Patrick filling their sails, and the oars flashing in the sunshine. It was Donal O'Flahertie and his kinsmen coming for his bride. Bright and joyous was the day which followed. The blessing on the union was pronounced in the old abbey of Murrisk. Richard Bourke, though absent, sent his good wishes by Walter Kittagh Bourke. The Devil's Hook and his son Edmund were there. Owen oge O'Malley and Grace's nephew, the young Edmund O'Malley, came from Cahir-na-Mart. Dhudarra Roe from Innish Clare with the fair-haired Eileen were the very first to arrive. McPhilbins and O'Flaherties were well represented. Connemara and the Owles were to be linked in the marriage, and all came to see that it was well done. Kilmeena was given up to festivity, and two days later Grace, radiant with happiness which shone through some tears, took her leave of the old castle and her kinsfolk ; love for Donal, ambition, and a strong attachment to her old home contesting for mastery in her breast.

The ebb tide carried their galley seawards amidst a salvo from the guns of Kilmeena and shouts from the various craft anchored in the creek. Then they sped over the blue waters of Clew Bay, set like a sheet of turquoise amid mountain peaks, out towards the sparkling ocean beyond. Innish Clare, Innish Turk were passed in succession. And as evening closed, Innish Bofin was abeam, the mountains of Connemara showing over it in a line of serrated peaks. A couple of French shallopss were slowly edging in towards the Killaries with their loads of fish, and a Spanish zabra was anchored with her sail furled in the midst of a little flotilla of small boats whose fish she was taking and preparing for salting on board.

All was peaceful, and the failing wind at last left them becalmed ere Carrig-na-Real, or, as it is now called, Slyne Head, was reached. All night under the stars the galley drifted with the tide, and it was daybreak before the Head was passed. To the southward of the Head, they entered the fringe of islets on which the swell of

the Atlantic breaking eternally was now filling the lower levels of the atmosphere with a pale white haze. Cautiously inward they made their way, and at last let go anchor in the islet-sheltered harbour of Bunown, where O'Flahertie's castle stood proudly on the rising ground above the yellow strand.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE "FEROCIOS O'FLAHERTIES."

UNLIKE the towering cliffs of Achill or of the north coast of Mayo, that portion of West Connaught called Connemara presents a low-lying coast of rugged granite hillocks partially covered with black peat, penetrated by a marvellous complexity of arms of the sea, which run inland for many miles, now forming large bays dotted with islets, and again ramifying off into long intricate creeks, while at low water are laid bare rocks and boulders without number, all clad in dark black fucus. In the autumn this weed turns to a golden yellow, rivalling in colour the asphodel of the moorland lying beyond, and the moorland extends inland to the mountains of Benabeola, now known as the

"Twelve pins," which rise abruptly from the low coast country we have described. The view from one of these bare granite summits reveals to us such a labyrinth of lakes and tarns that we might truly say that for every islet off the coast there is a lakelet in the land.

Passing south-eastward along this deeply indented and islet-girt Connemara coast, and leaving the large Isles of Aran on our starboard hand, we enter the Bay of Galway, where, in the sixteenth century, behind the city walls, with their bastions and drawbridges, the English had established a firm footing. Iar Connaught was, however, under the free sway of the O'Flaherties. O'Flahertie of Moycullen, in the east, had certainly given proof of his leaning towards the English, but amidst these far western creeks, bogs, and lakes, the bulk of the clan still defied the foreign invader.

When opportunity offered, they swooped down on the settlers, who were trying to establish trade under shelter of the English bastions; and so great was the terror of

their name, that the citizens of Galway inscribed over their western gate this solemn prayer, "*From ye ferocious O'Flaherties, good Lord, deliver us.*"

As already stated, the Isles of Aran lie off the Connemara coast, and form a natural breakwater to Galway Bay, protecting it with their great overhanging precipices from the full surge of the Atlantic. These islands are of intense interest to antiquaries, on account of their many ruins of great stone forts and buildings "where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt," their ruined sanctuaries, while their vast sheets of bare and much fissured limestone forms the greatest possible contrast to the granite rocks and bog land of the adjacent coast. Instead of heaths and sour sedge, the hollows of these islands are clad with bright green grass of the very best quality, and on this sweet pasturage cattle thrive and fatten in a manner quite extraordinary.

Away to the southward of Galway Bay, the coast line of Thomond, or county of Clare, once more rises into the famous cliffs

of Moher, which present a huge rampart to the thundering surge of the ocean.

At the period with which we are now engaged, some of the O'Briens of Thomond, forming the *Clan Teige*, had occupied and held the Isles of Aran. Conor O'Brien ruled there supreme, and was in constant rivalry with the O'Flaherties, who formerly had for generations been in possession. The O'Malleys also claimed sovereignty over all the out-islands of Connaught, and now, by Grace's marriage, two of these claims were combined.

It was a time, therefore, for the O'Briens to look to their defences. Their flocks and herds were in danger. Already, with most unfriendly spirit, a galley of the O'Flaherties had captured an O'Brien vessel in Galway Bay, and carried off her cargo of cheeses and butter for the delectation of the wild kerne of Ballinahinch. In retaliation for this O'Brien had seized and hanged four fishermen who were driven by stress of weather into Killeaney Bay.

Iar-Connaught thus threatened Aran, and

Aran hated Connaught. These strained relations surely pointed to war, for war in those days was the final appeal between man and man, between sept and sept; the idea of a law external to the clan being almost beyond their powers of conception.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MUSTER OF THE CLANS.

THREE years had come and gone since Grace O'Malley, or *Grania Waile* as she was now always called, had taken up her residence at Bunown. She had presented O'Flahertie with two sons, the elder named Owen and the younger Murrough, who was now but an infant in arms. These years were fraught with events of much moment to the interests of the western chieftains. The rumble of distant war came from Desmond, where the Holy League was progressing. The Lord-Deputy, Sir Henry Sydney, in a great tour which he had made through the provinces, had come to Connaught, and the O'Connor Don, for some time a waverer, had practically submitted to him. He had, at all events, surrendered his two great

castles of Roscommon and Ballintober. These castles, the great outworks behind which the western clans maintained their independence, having fallen, it behoved these western chieftains to look to their nearer defences, and either to strike back, or, once and for all, to abandon resistance. Conflicting counsels for some time kept matters quiet, or at most only simmering ; but when the Lord-Deputy returned to Dublin, he left Sir Edward Fitton as President of Connacht.

Fitton, owing to the policy he had adopted, soon found it necessary to fight a pitched battle with the Bourkes and O'Flaherties led by the MacWilliam Eighter. The opposing forces met at Shrue, to the east of Lough Corrib. A bloody engagement ensued. The Irish at first carried all before them. Both sides claimed the victory, which left the general question between them much the same as before ; but it pledged all who were engaged in it to open hostility. The President, passing through Galway, made an

incursion into Iar Connaught, destroying one of the O'Flahertie castles.

The desire to maintain peace, which had hitherto deterred the O'Flaherties from taking active measures for the recovery of the Isles of Aran, was now no longer felt, and the clansmen eagerly grasped at the suggestion of an attack upon the Islands.

The chiefs met ; the campaign was planned. The Devil's Hook promised to come with a galley. The O'Malleys would be to the front with men and galleys, while the O'Flaherties, from Lough Corrib to the Western Ocean, with few exceptions, would muster in full force.

Such organising could not go forward without the news leaking out. Conor O'Brien of Aran appealed to his kinsmen in Thomond and to a section of the Clanrickards for help, and boats went to and fro bringing in supplies for the defence of his island home.

Innish More, the largest of the Aran islands, about nine miles long, presents a coast-line of limestone rocks, broken only in

two places by Killeaney and Kilmurvey bays. The former is at the eastern extremity of the island, its landing-place defended by a strong castle, and between it and Kilmurvey lies nearly four miles of rugged limestone, cleft by deep fissures, down in which the delicate maiden-hair and other lovely ferns flourish. In the spring the pastures and the hollows are bright with blue gentians, wild roses, and other flowers, but away towards the western cliffs the grey limestone gives its own dreary tint to the whole surface of the island. If the island should be invaded O'Brien knew that Kilmurvey and Killeaney would, one or both, be the centre of danger.

Bunown presented a busy scene when the allies commenced to arrive. There was drilling and practice with hand-guns, sharpening of axes and mending of armour going forward from morning to night, and amidst these warlike preparations Grace reigned a queen, the pride of the O'Malleys and the idol of O'Flahertie.

At last the day came when the galleys

were to leave Bunown for the rendezvous in the Greatman's Bay, which gives safe shelter opposite to Aran, on the Connaught shore. A loud cheer greeted the sea queen as she left the castle for her galley. Never before in her life did she look to greater advantage. Her saffron-dyed bodice was partly covered by the light coat of chain mail of Spanish make which Donal made her wear ; her petticoat, the same colour as the bodice, was bound round her waist with a belt of curiously wrought silver, from which hung a skene in its sheath, and loosely round her shoulders a crimson scarf was flung, which contrasted well with the olive tint of her cheek and the coils of black hair, bound in tight plaits round her head. Donal, too, in his steel morion and tunic of chain armour, was fully prepared for the work in hand. He meant to extend the power of his clan. Grace felt inspired by the thought that she was about to strike not only at the O'Briens, but at the power of the foreign oppressor, at the invaders now temporarily established in

Galway. It was a step which promised great things. Enthusiasm was at its height. Men and boys, who, on account of their age, could take no part in the expedition, with the women and girls, crowded around the place of embarkation. Many a tear was shed as mother parted with son and sweetheart with lover. The old crones had been propitiated to wish well to the expedition, though one poor creature, whose importunity was excessive, was hustled back as O'Flahertie came along. Grace caught her eye scintillating with anger as she vanished in the throng, and felt a momentary shudder lest it should be the flash of the Evil Eye, which she, as a firm believer in witchcraft, so much dreaded. Absolutely fearless as to all tangible things, the unknown, unseen powers of darkness often touched the one weak spot in her nature.

The thought was dashed aside almost as soon as conceived, and shortly after the thirty oars of her galley struck the water and the little fleet followed her out into the open sea.

The gentle south-westerly breeze which was blowing enabled them, when clear of all dangerous reefs, to run in the oars and shake out the tall sails. Then, threading their way inside the Skirds and numerous outlying islets which fringe the coast, they took their way as evening fell through narrow channels, passable only at high tide. Thus, without becoming visible to the watchers on the Aran Isles, to whom the outer coast and sea between would be clearly visible, they entered the Greatman's Bay.

Donal oge and Roger O'Flahertie were there with their galleys, the latter guarding the mouth of the bay and preventing any boat from leaving, which might take news to the enemy.

On the shore, close to where, side by side, the galleys lay moored, the kerne and gallowglasses who had arrived by land were assembled, and as the sun sank its red rays flashed from the steel caps, bright axes, and shining pikes of the troops, while the tall yards of the galleys were reflected in the still water. The night turned out hazy,

but the moon gave good light, and beneath its rays the chiefs met on the poop of the Bunown galley in council of war.

"Kinsmen and friends," began O'Flahertie, "we have met to strike a blow which has long been thought of. For long we have taken the insults of the O'Briens as if we were women or children, or as men who loved peace better than power. We cannot delay any longer, for, with the English in Galway and a foe on our flank, we shall be like slaves in fetters, our ships and our people, our flocks and herds, always in danger. The O'Flaherties must rule in Aran, and when the help comes from Spain we will there be in the best position to receive our friends and destroy the enemy by sea and by land."

"We all agree with that," said the Devil's Hook. "We will see the work done well; it was that brought us here."

"Well said," went on O'Flahertie. "I know we can all count on each other; but one word more. The difficulties before us are great; the enemy is prepared. Our

plan is to leave here two hours before dawn, and with the first streak of light take the ground on Kilmurvey strand. If the enemy are there the fire of the ordnance from the galleys will drive them back. Then, men, it is for us to land. What say you all ? ”

“ Agreed ! agreed ! ” rose in a murmur from chiefs.

“ Then comes the battle ; and what I say is, Remember Shrûle ! How was it we drove the foe before us then ? Was it not because of the pledge we had given each to other that morning—that whether those who fell were friends or foes, we would not break our ranks, but push on to the attack ? It must be done the same way now.” And, raising his voice so as to be heard by the sailors and kerne, who were assembled on the galleys and pressing towards him, he repeated some of his words and concluded : “ When the order to land is given, pikemen first, gallowglasses next, musketeers last. No time must be lost ; your arms are for work. Onwards, then, onwards to victory — stop not for

friend or for foe. Shoulder to shoulder, pike to pike, drive them back with the first rush. I pledge you to that!" and, drawing his sword, he sent the moon's rays flashing from its bright blade. A subdued roar of approval burst from the assembly, above which the words, "We pledge, we pledge," rose from chief and from kerne. "And I pledge," said Grace, stepping forward, the bright skene flashing in her hand, while her clear voice rang through the still night air. A wild cry of enthusiasm arose from the crews, so fierce as to terrify the poor peasants who had assembled on the shore. The children screamed, and the sea birds, which had settled to sleep on the water, flew off with frightened cries.

Presently the council broke up, the men betook themselves to rest, and no signs of life betokened the presence of the armed force, save the occasional glitter of the moonlight on the arms of the guards, and the dull glow of the fires on shore, where the cooks were preparing food for the morrow.

When the falling of the tide told the

watchers that the hour had come for the start, the silence was broken by the clash of arms and the murmur of many voices as the kerne and gallowglasses stowed themselves in the crowded galleys. The moon had set, and the night was pitchy dark owing to the sea haze obscuring the stars.

O'Flahertie of Lettermullen Castle, to whom the bay was best known, led the way in a small galley, and as the splash of a hundred oars broke the calm surface of the bay, the peasants, who still lingered around the dying fires, set up a shout of "God speed!" and the little fleet glided off seawards in the gloom, helped by the last of the ebbing tide.

The chiefs gave orders that the men should pull gently, and spare themselves for the work of the coming day. Then the dark shadows of the land grew dim and the long send of the swell told them that they were in the open sea.

On their starboard hand the occasional roar of a breaker indicated the position of the last outlying rock, the same rock on

which, ten years previously, Thuatha O'Malley was wrecked, and where he and a hundred brave men with him were lost.

As Grace listened to the moaning sea, it sounded to her like an everlasting knell which tolled o'er her uncle's grave.

When clear of the land the stars shone brighter, and the gently swelling forms of the hills of Aran became dimly visible against the night sky to the southward.

On and on sped the galleys over the glassy sea, then the pale light of the dawn came into the sky, and when the murmur of the surf on the Aran shore struck on their ears the chiefs called a halt. The oars were soon in, and the morning meal was served for all hands.

Having been previously prepared, the junks of stewed beef and oaten cakes were quickly disposed of. The meal was washed down with foaming beer, and as their presence could not yet be detected from Aran they lay on their oars for a brief rest, each man taking the opportunity to see that his pike or his axe were ready to his hand.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BATTLE OF KILMURVEY.

WHILE thus allowing the crews to rest and refresh themselves, O'Flahertie, whose galley held the most advanced position, was informed by the look-out that a boat was approaching from the direction of the Isles of Aran; theplash of the oars was heard, then they ceased, and a low whistle came from out the darkness. O'Flahertie replied with a similar signal, whereupon the curragh came on, and was soon alongside. She contained two men, who stepped on board, and while O'Flahertie led one of them towards his cabin he directed the men to raise the curragh from the water and lash her on the poop.

“Well, how goes it in the islands?”

asked O'Flahertie of his visitor, a rough, stalwart young man, clad in coarse homespun and wearing on his feet the native pampooties, or sandals of raw hide.

"They are fully prepared, and expected you yesterday," replied the youth. "Two cannon have been brought in a vessel to Ardkin Castle, and there are at least four hundred men under arms; a hundred of them arrived three days ago from Galway."

"Are the English, then, helping O'Brien?" broke in Grace, passionately.

"Aye, my lady, it is believed so, though not openly."

"Where does the chief force lie?"

"In truth, O'Flahertie *of the Battles*," continued the youth, "O'Brien is at a loss to know where to defend; but he has about three hundred kerne camped this night near Monaster Kieran; there is an outpost on Kilmurvey Strand; but in Killeaney Bay he has one hundred men of Clanrickard and the Lynches; besides which, the castle with its warders, makes it difficult to land anywhere there."

"Was there much swell on the shore when you came off?" asked O'Flahertie.

"Truth there is," said the man, "and you may give up all notion of landing anywhere save on Kilmurvey Strand or in Killeaney Bay."

"That settles the matter," said Grace; "it must be Kilmurvey, and there is no time to lose, for if O'Brien's centre see us approaching they will have time to strengthen their outpost at Kilmurvey. Tell me," she added, "how will your people act?"

"Well, lady dear," replied the youth, shrinking from the glance of her dark eyes, as he looked her in the face, "they are not much to count on; if you are beaten, they will be your enemies; if you win, they will be your friends; as for me, if they caught me after this, one party or the other would burn me alive."

"Do not fear for that," said O'Flahertie. "I never forget a friend, and if your information proves correct, you are my friend so long as you wish to count me one. Here's my hand."

As the dawn was now really breaking through the darkness of night, it was time to advance ; and when the word “ Kilmurvey ” passed from galley to boat and boat to galley the oars once more rattled out, and they swept along in close order, pulling like heroes, to conquer or die.

The larger galleys led the way, and as with foaming tracks they sped over the dark sea, the gunners loaded their pieces, and the dull sparks of fire showed that the slow matches had been lit.

The low limestone points upon which the swell broke with sullen roar were already abreast on either hand as increasing light made objects visible, and when the smooth beach came in sight moving masses of men were dimly seen above the white line where the sea broke and a fierce, defiant shout of “ *O'Brien aboo !* ” pealed across the water, but the galleys rushed onwards, and a few moments later they grounded on the smooth sand.

As previously arranged, the smaller craft now shot up abreast of the larger, and,

taking the ground half their lengths ahead, formed gangways to the shallow water.

No shot had yet been fired, for the O'Briens, having no desire to expose themselves to the fire of the ordnance, fell back as the galleys approached, and were now sheltering behind a rough breastwork of stones hastily piled together on the sandhills at some distance from the beach; while, on the brow of the hill to the eastward, the rising sun glinted on the arms of a large party, which with excited yells was hastening to the fray. "Pike men, away!" was now the cry among the galleys, as, following O'Flahertie's lead, the chieftains leaped to the sand. Then the gallowglasses, with their long-handled axes, sprang into the sea and waded through the surf sparkling on the beach. Cautiously the musketeers, keeping their pieces and lighting matches clear of the spray, followed, and while they drew up in battle array, Grace, standing on the fore-deck of her galley, ordered the crews to shove off, for by keeping afloat they would be more ready for any emergency which might arise.

Well used to such work, the land force fell quickly into a dense phalanx, while the musketeers on either flank formed up in open order. “O’Flahertie to Victory!” pealed from five hundred throats, and as the galleys fired their heaviest pieces in the direction of the breastwork of the enemy, O’Flahertie led his men up the beach, and then, with wild shouts and the fire of the musketeers, went at the entrenchment with a rush. They were met by an answering volley and by a flight of arrows, and the men in the galleys saw many a comrade reel back and, throwing up his arms, fall to the dust. The sun now rose o’er the hill ; his rays flashed on the arms of the combatants, and cast a warm glow on the drifting smoke.

Then men were seen flying from out the smoke and falling as they fled, and the men in the galleys shouted loud for O’Flahertie and victory. But now, from behind a swell of the limestone rocks, the great strength of the O’Briens came in view, and with terrific yells they swept down on the O’Flaherties.

It was difficult for those on the galleys to

estimate the full force of the impact. Grace was wild with anxiety and enforced inaction. The gunners glanced along their long cannon in vain ; they dare not fire on friend and foe now mixed up in deadly strife. The wave of battle then swept back towards the galleys. Backwards, but with their faces to the enemy, the O'Flaherties were now being driven, crushed by a force numbering nearly twice their own. "Stand to your guns, men," said Grace, but the warning was unnecessary, for the gunners were only too anxious to interpose. Back, down from the rocky ridge to the green grass and then to the white strand, the invaders were driven. O'Flahertie was still safe. Grace could distinguish his crimson scarf in the front of the battle as he waved his sword and tried to get his men to stand. One of the galleys now chanced a shot. Then their comrades, now below the brow, threw themselves flat on their faces on the beach, and the full thunder of guns broke on the still morning air. As the shot sent clouds of sand mingled with

splintered limestone flying into the faces of the enemy, some of the heavy ordnance doing still more serious damage, the O'Briens paused in their onset. O'Flahertie's musketeers, who were now ready, fired again without standing. One more discharge from the galleys, and, springing to their feet, the invaders, who had now regained breath and courage, and were strengthened by fifty fresh men from the boats, rushed forward with loud cries. As the wave of battle broke it was evident that the tide had turned. The O'Briens were soon in full retreat. They were repulsed, many were slain, but they were not conquered. It was for O'Flahertie and his allies to follow up the advantage they had gained, and force on the final issue.

Far over the rugged sheets of grey limestone straggled the long line of retreating men, the musketeers now and then halting to fire and so check the pursuers. Friend and foe were soon lost to sight, except that down the beach wounded men staggered, striving to reach the boats. Then came

three bearing a wounded comrade, and Grace strained her eyes to see who it could be. It was Dhudarra Roe of Innish Clare. His leg was shot through, and, being weak from loss of blood, he needed prompt attention in order to save his life.

Then others came in sight, and, fainting, sank on the blood-stained sand. A ghastly tale they told of what lay beyond. "There were heaps of dead and dying over the brow yonder."

"How fared Donal," eagerly inquired Grace.

"He fared well, he is off in the pursuit ; we have won the day," said one, while another shook his head silently.

"Speak ! speak !" cried Grace ; "and by Heaven ! I will hang you if you lie."

"He fares well, he fares well," said the Scot. "He was wounded before, and he is wounded again. Would to God I had the use of my arm, and I would even now be at his side."

The desire to land and seek him out was to Grace the one overwhelming thought,

but the day was still young, her pledge was still unredeemed. Regardless of friend or foe, she should act for the success of the expedition. Her clear duty now was to follow the battle with the three large galleys, cut off the retreat of the enemy, and support her friends in Killeaney Bay. Her orders were quickly given. The smaller boats were to pick up the wounded, and then, with sails filled to a fresh westerly breeze, she led the larger craft out of the bay and away to the eastward.

To avoid outlying rocks she kept far from the shore, and, except for the puffs of smoke and occasional reports of firearms, they could tell but little of how the affair on land was going. On reaching Killeaney Bay they sailed boldly in. Soon stragglers began to appear making for the beach, but, driven back by the fire from the galleys, were forced to take a more inland route towards Ardkin, where, on the south side of the bay, the O'Brien's banner floated from their fortress. Then the fugitives ceased to be seen, and Grace, approaching the shore,

landed with fifty men to reconnoitre. Peasants, armed with pikes and clubs, were hastening along to the westward. "For O'Flahertie and Victory!" they shouted. Grace and her men, fearing treachery, but still anxious to know what it all meant, advanced in their company. On reaching the summit of the limestone ridge a vast concourse was seen ahead. The truth was quickly realised; the islanders had risen against their late tyrants, and, thinking that some good might come from a change of masters, had cut off the retreat of the remnant of O'Brien's force.

When O'Brien found the fight at Kilmurvey going against him, he determined to fall back on the camp of the previous night, and there to make a stand. By thus drawing the invading party away from the support of the galleys, he would clearly have an advantage, and the Clanrickard party would no doubt come on and join him in their destruction. When first the crowd of islanders were observed approaching from the eastward O'Brien's men set up a great

shout of “Clanrickard to Victory!” The truth, however, soon revealed itself, relief and retreat seemed alike impossible. A massacre was imminent, and feeling certain that Killeaney was even now blockaded by the galleys, O’Brien accepted the situation, and, after a brief consultation with his followers, offered to surrender to the O’Flaherties on condition that his own life and the lives of the men should be spared.

“Tell him,” replied Teige *ne bulley* O’Flaherty, who commanded since Donal had fallen wounded, “that the Castle of Ardkin must be surrendered to us without any more fighting. We will hold him and his chief men as hostages for this being carried out. If he fails to get this done, we will hang him and six of his best men when the sun is high to-morrow. If he accepts, let him come out with his men and stack their arms on the flat rock yonder. Teige O’Flahertie and Murrough of Ballinahinch, with The O’Malleys, the Devil’s Hook and his son, pledge their words to the conditions I have named.”

There was a pause—the messenger returned. The islanders, undecided as to what turn events would take, and seeing that a parley was proceeding, halted at a safe distance from the guns, which they dreaded.

Then the loose stone wall was shoved down, and O'Brien's men, with sullen looks, filed from the entrenchment and piled their arms as directed. Then some kerne, too badly wounded to walk, were borne out, and Conor O'Brien, with his kinsman, Murrogh Oge, whose father had recently been treacherously murdered by his own followers, came forward and submitted to be bound arm to arm. This was also done with about half the force, while upon the remaining kerne the arms were piled. The islanders now came up closer, and brave shouts were sent up to the glory of the O'Flaherties.

It was just at this moment that Grace and her body-guard appeared on the scene. When she saw Donal's kinsman in command, and he nowhere visible, a terrible

fear fell upon her. Although her gallow-glasses dreaded the worst, they kept their thoughts to themselves. Edmund Bourke, with morion gone, and his clotted locks bound with a blood-stained bandage, was quickly at her side.

"Donal is wounded, but I hope not seriously; ten of his gallowglasses bore him off to the ruined monastery yonder, and no doubt guard him there. I could not see what happened, as my eyes were dim from my own wound. I had to keep to the front and did so, though, truth to tell, I can scarce stand at this moment, now that the fighting is over."

With a look expressing thanks which no words could convey, and not waiting to hear more, Grace set off for the ruined church. Would she be too late? Down through the little pasturages nestling amid rocks she made her way. The grey gables of the little abbey founded by St. Kieran were the mark she aimed for. The door was guarded by two of her favourite Scots, who had stood by Donal in many a well-fought

field. Now, blood-stained and sullen, they gave her no greeting. Grace felt that the silence was ominous. It was, therefore, with blanched cheek and beating heart that she entered the little arched doorway. In the midst of the ruined chancel a group of her veterans were gathered, and there lay her Donal; but his heart was now still. And the fierce yet loving and true spirit of "Donal of the battles" had returned to the God who gave it.

"Too late!" cried Grace in agony, as before the altar of the saint she flung herself to the earth and buried her face in the cloud of her dark hair, which had broken loose and fell over his mailed breast.

The gallowglasses stood around, not daring to break the solemn silence which was only made audible by two poor women of the island, who, kneeling before the altar, murmured low prayers for the safe passage of his soul, and invoked the protection of the saint and of all the holy angels.

"Oh, how did he die?" cried Grace imploringly, rising suddenly to her knees

and addressing a kerne from Innish Clare who knew her from her childhood. Then she saw a broken arrow in his neck just above where the mail gave full protection.

"Yes, Grania, dear," addressing her as though she were his child, "that wound on his arm, where he was hit near Kilmurvey Strand, would not have done much harm, but just up there, where the O'Briens made their last stand at the camp, they sent a flight of arrows; few of us were hurt, but two or three hit him, and that one unlucky one—just that one! We tried to draw it out, but then the bleeding came so bad. We thought for a while he would do. A woman wise about wounds is on her way here, but she need not come now. Ah! the wound went too deep."

As the colour came and went in Grace's face, the soldier wiped from his cheek a tear which trickled down. To him the death of Donal was a greater blow than if he had been his own nearest relative; he could speak no more.

Grace sank again to the earth, to struggle to be calm and collected for his sake, and for the sake of those who still lived; and the sea seemed to sing its low moan of sympathy as the surf broke incessantly on the grey limestone shore.

CHAPTER XX.

ARAN AND INNISH CLARE.

ALL night the watch-fires burned brightly on the ridge of the narrow part of the island, south of Killeaney Bay, so as to insure the close blockade of the castle. The galleys also pulled guard, and once the echoes were awakened by the loud report of ordnance, when the galley guarding Gregory Sound fired into and sunk a boat in which twenty halberdiers from Galway were attempting to make good their escape.

The boats from Kilmurvey, which arrived soon after nightfall with the wounded, reported that the carnage at the entrenchments had been terrible. They had delayed to bury their dead

comrades, but the enemy's dead, which were in greater numbers, were uncared for.

Soon after sunrise, the chief prisoners, who had been guarded on board the galleys during the night, were landed, and Teige *ne Bulley*, selecting spars from the fishing boats on the shore, caused O'Brien's kerne to bear them to the top of a hill overlooking the castle.

Here, jambing the spars into the chinks of the limestone, a high gibbet was set up, and the O'Briens, guarded by the gallowglasses, were led to the front.

"Now, O'Brien," said O'Flahertie, addressing the chieftain, "select the best of your kerne for bearing a message. Tell him to inform your people that if the flag is not hauled down and your warders open the gates and come out within one hour, that one of you will be hanged, and for every man they see hanging the heads of six of your kerne will be sent to them as a gift. We shall now draw lots as to who is the first to die."

The messenger went with the grim

message, and hailed the keep, from the summit of which the O'Brien's flag still floated defiantly.

Half an hour passed, and no answer was returned. The lots were drawn. "Conor O'Brien himself is number two," said the Devil's Hook dryly. Number One was dragged beneath the gallows, the rope put round his neck, and six stout men told off to run him up. Slow strangling, not sudden death, being the fate in store for him.

In the castle much confusion existed. The women of the O'Briens and the permanent warders were for immediate surrender, whereas Lynch from Galway and his contingent were for holding out until help should arrive. While the debate was proceeding a wild shriek from the women on the battlemented roof announced that something had happened, and looking towards the hill they saw the body of a man swinging from the gibbet, which stood out clear against the sky.

Soon afterwards a kerne of the O'Brien's arrived with his ghastly burthen and an-

nounced that Conor O'Brien himself would be next.

The feeling now ran high against Lynch and his men, and one of the women, seizing the halyards of the flag, was hauling it down, when she was shoved rudely aside by a halberdier, and the flag rose once more to the staff-head.

As may be supposed, Conor O'Brien, on the hill summit, watched this incident with intense anxiety.

Now the warders, seizing their arms, called upon the Galway men to leave the castle and escape, for if not they would fire the magazine.

The frenzy of the women, and the known devotion of the warders to their leader, made them tremble for the issue. The cellar doors had been seized by the warders, and were now out of their power. A chance of escape by sea was still a possibility, though the ever-watchful galleys lay on their oars ready to pounce on any fugitive who should attempt to bolt.

One other chance was left, to send a

messenger to O'Flahertie, making the safety of their lives a condition of surrender. The message was sent, and in a quarter of an hour the herald returned with O'Flahertie's flat refusal. In ten minutes O'Brien should swing from the gibbet.

Once more the women rushed to the flag-staff and hauled down the flag, for the halberdiers had fled, and by this time forty of the stoutest sons of Galway were hastening along the rocks towards Gregory Sound, trusting there to find some of the skin boats of the natives in which they could escape from the island and take refuge in the O'Brien stronghold on Innish Sheer. Then a blank shot was fired, the portcullis was raised, and the little garrison of the castle filed out, and, unarmed, drew up in front of the deserted fortress.

Conor O'Brien was saved, and Innish More was in the hands of the O'Flaherties.

That evening two of the galleys sailed for Connemara, bearing with them three sons of the chieftains of Thomond as hostages for the complete abandonment of the

islands, and a goodly prey of oxen and sheep and valuables from the castle, which would give immediate satisfaction to the kerne.

Soon after leaving the bay the galleys separated, one only continued her voyage to Bunown. She bore the sad burthen of the dead chieftain and his Grania Waile.

On the shore a vast concourse assembled to greet them on their arrival. A cheer echoed across the water, while women pressed forward to gain the first news of those who were to them the nearest and dearest.

“Victory!” shouted one of the men from the galley’s prow as she neared the beach, and the shout was taken up and spread up and over the hill-side.

Then, as the vessel grounded, the terrible price paid for that victory became known.

Donal’s body was reverently carried ashore, and the shout of triumph changed to a wild keen of the women, who, above their own losses, gave expression to their sympathy for the sorrow-stricken queen,

who, with firm step, though with aching heart, followed the sad procession to their castle home.

* * * *

A month after the events just described, when all necessary arrangements had been made for the interest of the clan and the rights of Donal's two baby boys, Grace left Bunown with her foster-brother Dhudarra Roe, who had nearly recovered from his wound, and taking the children with her, returned to Clare Island. There on Eileen's love she rested, and soothed her own soul with deep draughts of sympathy as she told her sad story over and over again.

Grace was still young, only about four-and-twenty summers had passed over her head. The terrible blow she had suffered could not crush a character such as hers. It strengthened those very traits which brought her to the front in the history of her times, while it almost blighted for ever the softer side of her nature.

The storm and strife of the stirring scenes

she had passed through were now, for a time, over. She had returned to the calm of her childhood's home. But her life was like one of those cyclones which strike on our wild western shores, and the tranquillity which now she enjoyed was but the lull which almost invariably heralds in the full development of the tempest.

NOTE.

The dispute between the O'Flaherties and O'Briens concerning the Isles of Aran dragged slowly on. The O'Flaherties never relinquished their grasp on the western part of Innish More. Some years, however, elapsed before they finally "expulsed" the O'Briens from all the islands. When news of the final tragedy reached the ears of Queen Elizabeth, she appointed a special Commission to examine into the respective claims of the combatants, and finally, on the report of said Commission, settled the question off-hand by deciding that neither party had any right whatever, and in exercise of her own prerogative granted the islands to "Sir John Rawson, of Athlone, gentleman, his heirs and assigns."

THE END.

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